



ARTICLE №1 OF 8

THE DRONE PAPERS



Jeremy Scahill

October 15 2015, 4:57 a.m.

From his first days as commander in chief, the drone has been President Barack Obama's weapon of choice, used by the military and the CIA to hunt down and kill the people his administration has deemed — through secretive processes, without indictment or trial — worthy of execution. There has been intense focus on the technology of remote killing, but

that often serves as a surrogate for what should be a broader examination of the state's power over life and death.



DRONES ARE A TOOL, not a policy. The policy is assassination. While every president since Gerald Ford has upheld an executive order banning assassinations by U.S. personnel, Congress has avoided legislating the issue or even **defining** the word “assassination.” This has allowed proponents of the drone wars to rebrand assassinations with more palatable characterizations, such as the term du jour, “targeted killings.”

When the Obama administration has discussed drone strikes publicly, it has offered assurances that such operations are a more precise alternative to boots on the ground and are authorized only when an “imminent” threat is present and there is “near certainty” that the intended target will be eliminated. Those terms, however, appear to have been

bluntly **redefined** to bear almost no resemblance to their commonly understood meanings.

The first drone strike outside of a declared war zone was conducted more than **12 years ago**, yet it was not until May 2013 that the White House released a **set of standards and procedures** for conducting such strikes. Those guidelines offered little specificity, asserting that the U.S. would only conduct a lethal strike outside of an “area of active hostilities” if a target represents a “continuing, imminent threat to U.S. persons,” without providing any sense of the **internal process** used to determine whether a suspect should be killed without being indicted or tried. The implicit message on drone strikes from the Obama administration has been one of *trust, but don't verify*.



Photo: The Intercept

The Intercept has obtained a cache of secret slides that provides a window into the inner workings of the U.S. military's kill/capture operations at a

Document

**SMALL FOOTPRINT
OPERATIONS 2/13**

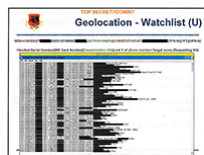
Document

**SMALL FOOTPRINT
OPERATIONS 5/13**

Document

**OPERATION
HAYMAKER**

Document

**GEOLOCATION-
WATCHLIST**

key time in the evolution of the drone wars – between 2011 and 2013. The documents, which also outline the internal views of special operations forces on the shortcomings and flaws of the drone program, were provided by a source within the intelligence community who worked on the types of operations and programs described in the slides. *The Intercept* granted the source's request for anonymity because the materials are classified and because the U.S. government has engaged in aggressive prosecution of whistleblowers. The stories in this series will refer to the source as "the source."

The source said he decided to provide these documents to *The Intercept* because he believes the public has a right to understand the process by which people are placed on kill lists and ultimately assassinated on orders from the highest echelons of the U.S. government. "This outrageous explosion of watchlisting – of monitoring people and racking and stacking them on lists, assigning them numbers, assigning them 'baseball cards,' assigning them death sentences without notice, on a worldwide battlefield – it was, from the very first instance, wrong," the source said.

“We’re allowing this to happen. And by ‘we,’ I mean every American citizen who has access to this information now, but continues to do nothing about it.”

The Pentagon, White House, and Special Operations Command all declined to comment. A Defense Department spokesperson said, “We don’t comment on the details of classified reports.”

The CIA and the U.S. military’s Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) operate parallel drone-based assassination programs, and the secret documents should be viewed in the context of an intense **internal turf war** over which entity should have supremacy in those operations. Two sets of slides focus on the military’s high-value targeting campaign in Somalia and Yemen as it existed between 2011 and 2013, specifically the operations of a secretive unit, Task Force 48-4.

Additional documents on high-value kill/capture operations in Afghanistan buttress **previous accounts** of how the Obama administration masks the true number of civilians killed in drone strikes by categorizing unidentified people killed in a strike as enemies, even if they were not the intended targets. The slides also **paint a picture** of a campaign in Afghanistan aimed not only at eliminating al Qaeda and Taliban operatives, but also at taking out members of other local armed groups.

One top-secret document shows how the terror “watchlist” appears in the terminals of personnel conducting drone operations, linking unique codes associated with cellphone SIM cards and handsets to specific individuals in order to geolocate them.

TOP SECRET SCI

Example Watchlist from 28APR2010.txt - Notepad

File	Edit	Format	View	Help
IMSI=418055457	IMEI=35196003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=05187-	(TFN-M)(TFE)(NFN-N)
IMSI=418010663	IMEI=35476803	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=58302-	(BPC)
IMSI=418300103	IMEI=35684203	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=00400-	(TFB)
IMSI=418054707	IMEI=35883003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=25710-	(TFB)
IMSI=418300603	IMEI=35504603	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=99462-	(SOTF-W)
IMSI=418300102	IMEI=35918003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=18183-	(OGA/CTTAC)(TF7-48)
IMSI=418054510	IMEI=35681503	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=18807-	(LNU) (OGA/CTTAC)
IMSI=418056118	IMEI=35603303	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=20449-	(TFB)(OGA/CTTAC)
IMSI=418300503	IMEI=35805103	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=85407-	(SOTF-W)
IMSI=418020133	IMEI=3532603	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=74370-03	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418055475	IMEI=35685703	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=14055-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418054706	IMEI=35576403	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=06372-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418054706	IMEI=35576403	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=74754-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418020202	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=31097-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418055459	IMEI=35322103	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=98958-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418053403	IMEI=3590703	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=42037-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418054708	IMEI=35364403	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=39028-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418055454	IMEI=35435503	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=04505-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418055457	IMEI=35571803	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=53958-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418054510	IMEI=35359603	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=13465-	(TF7-48)
IMSI=418020160	IMEI=35193203	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=70373-	(KNOXVILLE) (TFB)
IMSI=418053216	IMEI=35797903	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=04312-	(TFB)
IMSI=418053403	IMEI=35685703	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=66026-	(TFB)(DO NOT STRIKE)
IMSI=418055458	IMEI=35433003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=08690-	(TFB)
IMSI=418300403	IMEI=35933503	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=10681-	(TFB)
IMSI=418056102	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=46932-	(AOB)
IMSI=418053303	IMEI=35936503	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=90966-	(NFN)(AOB)
IMSI=418055902	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=47397-	(NFN-N)
IMSI=418053600	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=21594-	(AOB) (NFN)
IMSI=418056102	IMEI=35193003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=84739-	(NFN)
IMSI=418054216	IMEI=35797903	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=73725-	(NFN)
IMSI=418056101	IMEI=35826503	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=48166-	(NFN)
IMSI=418054820	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=73832-	(OGA/CCU)
IMSI=418054103	IMEI=35641303	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=29983-	(TFE)
IMSI=418054103	IMEI=35644703	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=97834-	(TFE)
IMSI=418053107	IMEI=35160403	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=26186-	(TFE)
IMSI=418053100	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=52145-	KIDNAPPING SUSPECT (TFE)
IMSI=418054101	IMEI=35958903	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=55420-	(KIDNAP VICTIM) (TFE)
IMSI=418054160	IMEI=35799303	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=13365-	(TFE)
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IMSI=418053600	IMEI=35694803	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=84776-	(TFE)
IMSI=418054160	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=01754-	(TFE)
IMSI=418054402	IMEI=	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=66020-	POSS ASSISTANT TO (TFE)
IMSI=418055501	IMEI=35229803	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=72919-	(TFE)
IMSI=418050124	IMEI=35799403	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=63605-	(TFE)
IMSI=418053104	IMEI=35570003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=10547-	(TFE)
IMSI=418054629	IMEI=35670189	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=26275-	(TFE)
IMSI=418054160	IMEI=35826503	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=75316-	(TFE)
IMSI=418055300	IMEI=35883700	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=93151-	(TFE)
IMSI=418055300	IMEI=35694803	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=38068-	(TFE)

TOP SECRET SCI

A top-secret document shows how the watchlist looks on internal systems used by drone operators.

The **costs to intelligence** gathering when suspected terrorists are killed rather than captured are outlined in the slides pertaining to Yemen and Somalia, which are part of a 2013 study conducted by a Pentagon entity, the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Task Force. The ISR study lamented the limitations of the drone program, arguing for more advanced drones and other surveillance aircraft and the expanded use of naval vessels to extend the reach of surveillance operations necessary for targeted strikes. It also contemplated the establishment of new “politically challenging” airfields and recommended capturing and interrogating more suspected terrorists rather than killing them in drone strikes.

The ISR Task Force at the time was under the control of Michael Vickers, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence. Vickers, a fierce proponent of drone strikes and a legendary paramilitary figure, had long pushed for a significant increase in the military's use of special opera-

tions forces. The ISR Task Force is **viewed by key lawmakers** as an advocate for more surveillance platforms like drones.

The ISR study also reveals **new details** about the case of a British citizen, Bilal el-Berjawi, who was stripped of his citizenship before being killed in a U.S. drone strike in 2012. British and American intelligence had Berjawi under surveillance for several years as he traveled back and forth between the U.K. and East Africa, yet did not capture him. Instead, the U.S. hunted him down and **killed him in Somalia**.

Taken together, the secret documents lead to the conclusion that Washington's 14-year high-value targeting campaign suffers from an overreliance on signals intelligence, an apparently incalculable civilian toll, and – due to a preference for assassination rather than capture – an inability to extract potentially valuable intelligence from terror suspects. They also highlight the futility of the war in Afghanistan by showing how the U.S. has poured vast resources into killing local insurgents, in the process exacerbating the very threat the U.S. is seeking to confront.



Read more

FIND, FIX, FINISH

These secret slides help provide historical context to Washington's ongoing wars, and are especially relevant today as the

U.S. military **intensifies** its drone strikes and covert actions against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Those campaigns, like the ones detailed in these documents, are unconventional wars that employ special operations forces at the tip of the spear.

The “find, fix, finish” doctrine that has fueled America's post-9/11 borderless war is being refined and institutionalized. Whether through the use of drones, night raids, or new platforms yet to be unleashed, these documents lay bare the normalization of assassination as a central component of U.S. counterterrorism policy.

“The military is easily capable of adapting to change, but they don’t like to stop anything they feel is making their lives easier, or is to their benefit. And this certainly is, in their eyes, a very quick, clean way of doing things. It’s a very slick, efficient way to conduct the war, without having to have the massive ground invasion mistakes of Iraq and Afghanistan,” **the source said.** “But at this point, they have become so addicted to this machine, to this way of doing business, that it seems like it’s going to become harder and harder to pull them away from it the longer they’re allowed to continue operating in this way.”



The articles in *The Drone Papers* were produced by a team of reporters and researchers from *The Intercept* that has spent months analyzing the documents. The series is intended to serve as a long-overdue public examination of the methods and outcomes of America's assassination program. This campaign, carried out by two presidents through four presidential terms, has been shrouded in excessive secrecy. The public has a right to see these documents not only to engage in an informed debate about the future of U.S. wars, both overt and covert, but also to understand the circumstances under which the U.S. government arrogates to itself the right to sentence individuals to death without the established checks and balances of arrest, trial, and appeal.

Among the key revelations in this series:

—HOW THE PRESIDENT AUTHORIZES TARGETS FOR

ASSASSINATION—

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KILL CHAIN



It has been widely reported that President Obama directly approves high-value targets for inclusion on the kill list, but the secret ISR study provides new insight into the kill chain,

including a detailed chart stretching from electronic and human intelligence gathering all the way to the president's desk. The same month the ISR study was circulated — May 2013 — Obama signed the policy guidance on the use of force in counterterrorism operations overseas. A senior administration official, who declined to comment on the classified documents, told *The Intercept* that “those guidelines remain in effect today.”

U.S. intelligence personnel collect information on potential targets, as *The Intercept* has **previously reported**, drawn from **government watchlists** and the work of intelligence, military, and law enforcement agencies. At the time of the study, when someone was destined for the kill list, intelligence analysts created a portrait of a suspect and the threat that person posed, pulling it together “in a condensed format known as a ‘baseball card.’” That information was then bundled with operational information and packaged in a “target information folder” to be “staffed up to higher echelons” for action. On average, it took 58 days for the president to sign off on a target, **one slide** indicates. At that point, U.S. forces had 60 days to carry out the strike. The documents include two case studies that are partially based on information detailed on baseball cards.

The system for **creating baseball cards** and targeting packages, according to the source, depends largely on intelligence intercepts and a multi-

layered system of fallible, human interpretation. “It isn’t a surefire method,” he said. “You’re relying on the fact that you do have all these very powerful machines, capable of collecting extraordinary amounts of data and information,” which can lead personnel involved in targeted killings to believe they have “godlike powers.”

—ASSASSINATIONS DEPEND ON UNRELIABLE INTELLIGENCE AND HURT INTELLIGENCE GATHERING—



Read more

FIRING BLIND

In undeclared war zones, the U.S. military has become overly reliant on signals intelligence, or SIGINT, to identify and ultimately

hunt down and kill people. The documents acknowledge that using metadata from phones and computers, as well as communications intercepts, is an inferior method of finding and finishing targeted people. They described SIGINT capabilities in these unconventional battlefields as “poor” and “limited.” Yet such collection, much of it provided by foreign partners, accounted for more than half the intelligence used to track potential kills in Yemen and Somalia. The ISR study characterized these failings as a technical hindrance to efficient operations, omitting the fact that **faulty intelligence** has led to the killing of innocent people, **including** U.S. citizens, in drone strikes.

The source underscored the unreliability of metadata, most often from phone and computer communications intercepts. These sources of information, identified by so-called selectors such as a phone number or email address, are the primary tools used by the military to find, fix, and finish its targets. “It requires an enormous amount of faith in the

technology that you're using," the source said. "There's countless instances where I've come across intelligence that was faulty." This, he said, is a primary factor in the killing of civilians. "It's stunning the number of instances when selectors are misattributed to certain people. And it isn't until several months or years later that you all of a sudden realize that the entire time you thought you were going after this really hot target, you wind up realizing it was his mother's phone the whole time."

Within the special operations community, the source said, the internal view of the people being hunted by the U.S. for possible death by drone strike is: "They have no rights. They have no dignity. They have no humanity to themselves. They're just a 'selector' to an analyst. You eventually get to a point in the target's life cycle that you are following them, you don't even refer to them by their actual name." This practice, he said, contributes to "dehumanizing the people before you've even encountered the moral question of 'is this a legitimate kill or not?'"

By the ISR study's own admission, killing suspected terrorists, even if they are "legitimate" targets, further hampers intelligence gathering. The secret study states bluntly: "Kill operations significantly reduce the intelligence available." A chart shows that special operations actions in the Horn of Africa resulted in captures just 25 percent of the time, indicating a heavy tilt toward lethal strikes.

—STRIKES OFTEN KILL MANY MORE THAN THE INTENDED TARGET—

Read more

MANHUNTING IN THE HINDU KUSH

The White House and Pentagon
boast that the targeted killing



program is precise and that civilian deaths are minimal.

However, documents detailing a special operations campaign in northeastern Afghanistan, Operation Haymaker, show that between January 2012 and February 2013, U.S. special operations airstrikes killed more than 200 people. Of those, only 35 were the intended targets. During one five-month period of the operation, according to the documents, nearly 90 percent of the people killed in airstrikes were not the intended targets. In Yemen and Somalia, where the U.S. has far more limited intelligence capabilities to confirm the people killed are the intended targets, the equivalent ratios may well be much worse.

“Anyone caught in the vicinity is guilty by association,” the source said. When “a drone strike kills more than one person, there is no guarantee that those persons deserved their fate. ... So it’s a phenomenal gamble.”

—THE MILITARY LABELS UNKNOWN PEOPLE IT KILLS AS “ENEMIES KILLED IN ACTION”—



Read more

MANHUNTING IN THE HINDU KUSH

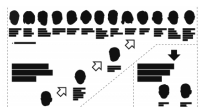
The documents show that the military designated people it killed in targeted strikes as EKIA — “enemy killed in ac-

tion” — even if they were not the intended targets of the strike. Unless evidence posthumously emerged to prove the males killed were not terrorists or “unlawful enemy combatants,” EKIA remained their designation, according to the source. That process, he said, “is insane. But we’ve made ourselves comfortable with that. The intelligence community,

JSOC, the CIA, and everybody that helps support and prop up these programs, they're comfortable with that idea."

The source described official U.S. government statements minimizing the number of civilian casualties inflicted by drone strikes as "exaggerating at best, if not outright lies."

—THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED FOR DRONE STRIKES AND OTHER FINISHING OPERATIONS—



Read more
KILL CHAIN

According to **one secret slide**, as of June 2012, there were 16 people in Yemen whom President Obama had authorized

U.S. special operations forces to assassinate. In Somalia, there were four. The statistics contained in the documents appear to refer only to targets approved under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, not CIA operations. In 2012 alone, according to data compiled by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, there were more than 200 people killed in operations in Yemen and between four and eight in Somalia.

—HOW GEOGRAPHY SHAPES THE ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN—

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the pace of U.S. strikes was much quicker than in Yemen and Somalia. This appears due, in large part, to the fact that Afghanistan and Iraq were declared war zones, and in Iraq the U.S. was able to



Read more

FIRING BLIND

launch attacks from bases closer to the targeted people. By contrast, in Somalia and Yemen, undeclared war zones where strikes were justified under tighter restrictions, U.S. attack planners described a serpentine bureaucracy for obtaining approval for assassination. The secret study states that the number of high-value targeting operations in these countries was “significantly lower than previously seen in Iraq and Afghanistan” because of these “constraining factors.”

Even after the president approved a target in Yemen or Somalia, the great distance between drone bases and targets created significant challenges for U.S. forces — a problem referred to in the documents as the “tyranny of distance.” In Iraq, more than 80 percent of “finishing operations” were conducted within 150 kilometers of an air base. In Yemen, the average distance was about 450 kilometers and in Somalia it was more than 1,000 kilometers. On average, one document states, it took the U.S. six years to develop a target in Somalia, but just 8.3 months to kill the target once the president had approved his addition to the kill list.

—INCONSISTENCIES WITH WHITE HOUSE STATEMENTS ABOUT TARGETED KILLING—

The White House's publicly available policy standards state that lethal



Read more

KILL CHAIN

force will be launched only against targets who pose a “continuing, imminent threat to U.S. persons.” In the documents, however, there is only

one **explicit mention** of a specific criterion: that a person “presents a threat to U.S. interest or personnel.” While such a rationale may make sense in the context of a declared war in which U.S. personnel are on the ground in large numbers, such as in Afghanistan, that standard is so vague as to be virtually meaningless in countries like Yemen and Somalia, where very few U.S. personnel operate.

While many of the documents provided to *The Intercept* contain explicit internal recommendations for improving unconventional U.S. warfare, the source said that what's implicit is even more significant. The mentality reflected in the documents on the assassination programs is: “This process can work. We can work out the kinks. We can excuse the mistakes. And eventually we will get it down to the point where we don't have to continuously come back ... and explain why a bunch of innocent people got killed.”

The architects of what amounts to a global assassination campaign do not appear concerned with either its enduring impact or its moral implications. “All you have to do is take a look at the world and what it's become, and the ineptitude of our Congress, the power grab of the executive branch over the past decade,” the source said. “It's never considered: Is what we're doing going to ensure the safety of our moral integrity? Of not just our moral integrity, but the lives and humanity of the people that are going to have to live with this the most?”

Photo: Mohammed Hamoud/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images



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CONTINUE READING THE DRONE PAPERS

01.



THE ASSASSINATION COMPLEX

Jeremy Scahill

The whistleblower who leaked the drone papers believes the public is entitled to know how people are placed on kill lists and assassinated on orders from the president.

02.

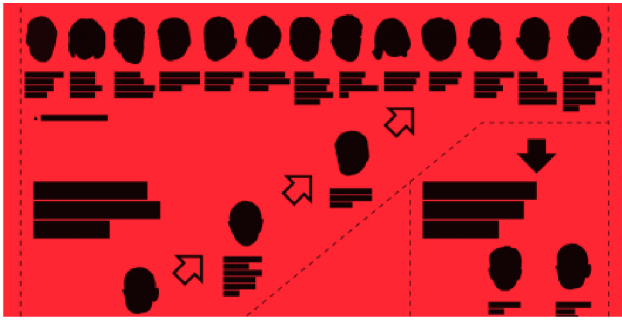


A VISUAL GLOSSARY

Josh Begley

Decoding the language of covert warfare.

03.



THE KILL CHAIN

Cora Currier

New details about the secret criteria for drone strikes and how the White House approves targets.

04.



FIND, FIX, FINISH

Jeremy Scahill

The tip of the spear in the Obama administration's ramped up wars in Somalia and Yemen was a special operations task force called TF 48-4.

05.

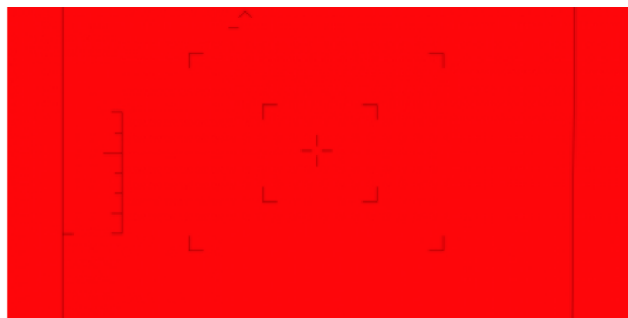


MANHUNTING IN THE HINDU KUSH

Ryan Devereaux

Leaked documents detailing a multi-year U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan reveal the strategic limits and startling human costs of drone warfare.

06.



Cora Currier, Peter Maass

A secret Pentagon study highlights the chronic flaws in intelligence used for drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia.

Ryan Gallagher

For years Bilal el-Berjawi traveled freely from the U.K. to Somalia under the watchful eyes of intelligence services. Then the U.S. killed him with a drone strike.

2015, JAN. 82
NIAMEY, NIGER,
WEST AFRICA

Nick Turse

To reduce the “tyranny of distance,” drones fly from bases in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Navy ships.

09. GLOSSARY

A guide to the acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms used in *The Drone Papers*.

10. DOCUMENTS

SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 2/13

SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 5/13

OPERATION HAYMAKER

GEOLOCATION WATCHLIST

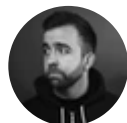
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**The
Intercept_**

02.

ARTICLE №2 OF 8

THE DRONE PAPERS



Josh Begley

October 15 2015, 4:58 a.m.

This is a labyrinth with 12 entrances and no exit. It is built on a cache of documents provided to *The Intercept* by a source

within the intelligence community.



Click any arrow to enter a rabbit hole. Each serves as a back door into one of our stories.

BIRDS →

The first bomb dropped from an airplane exploded in an oasis outside Tripoli on November 1, 1911.¹

While flying over Ain Zara, Libya, Lieutenant Giulio Gavotti leaned out of his airplane, which looked like a dragonfly, and dropped a Haasen hand grenade. It landed “in the camp of the enemy, with good results.”



One hundred years later, the bombing is done by pilotless planes. They are controlled remotely, often half a world away. We have come to call them “drones.”

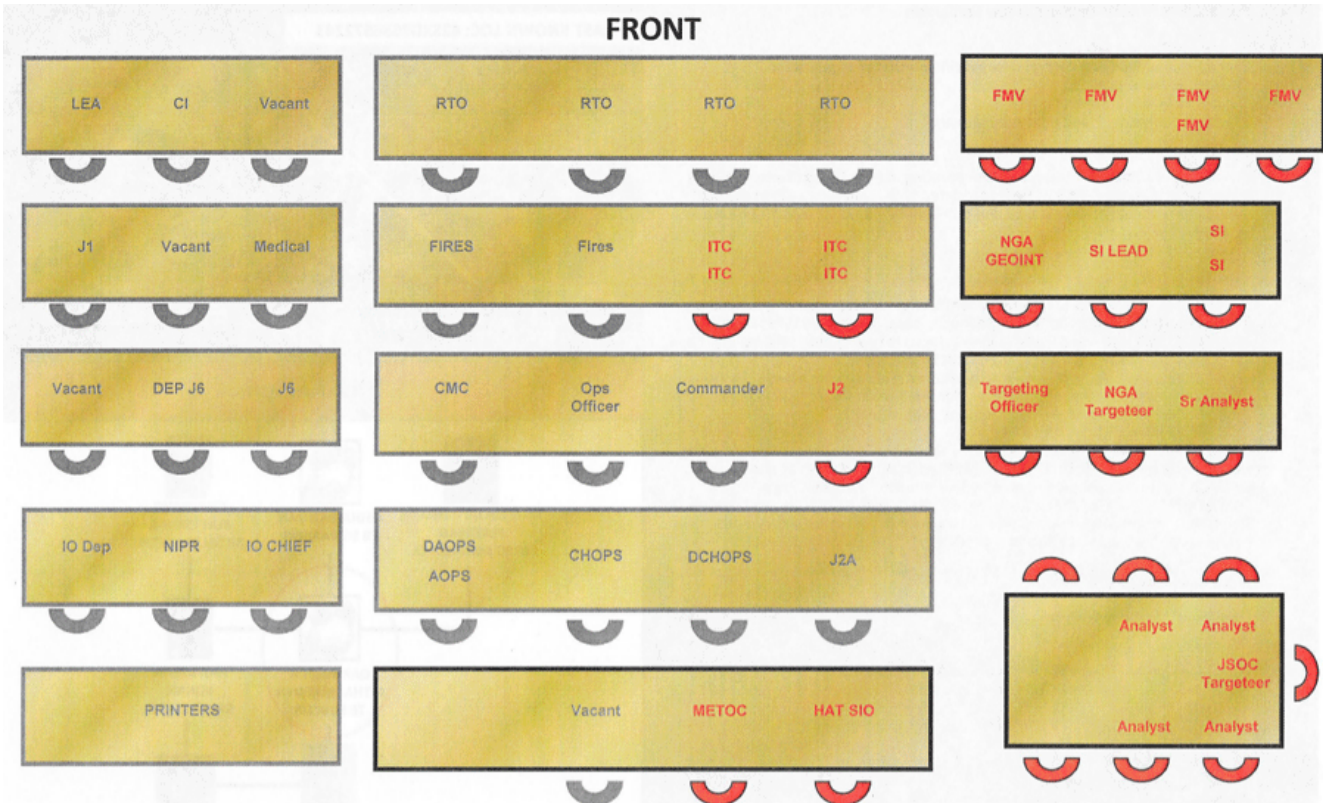
On the inside, people call them “birds.”



Photo: U.S. Air Force

Operators can watch their targets for hours, often from air-conditioned rooms, until they receive the order to fire. When the time is right, a room full of people watch as the shot is taken.

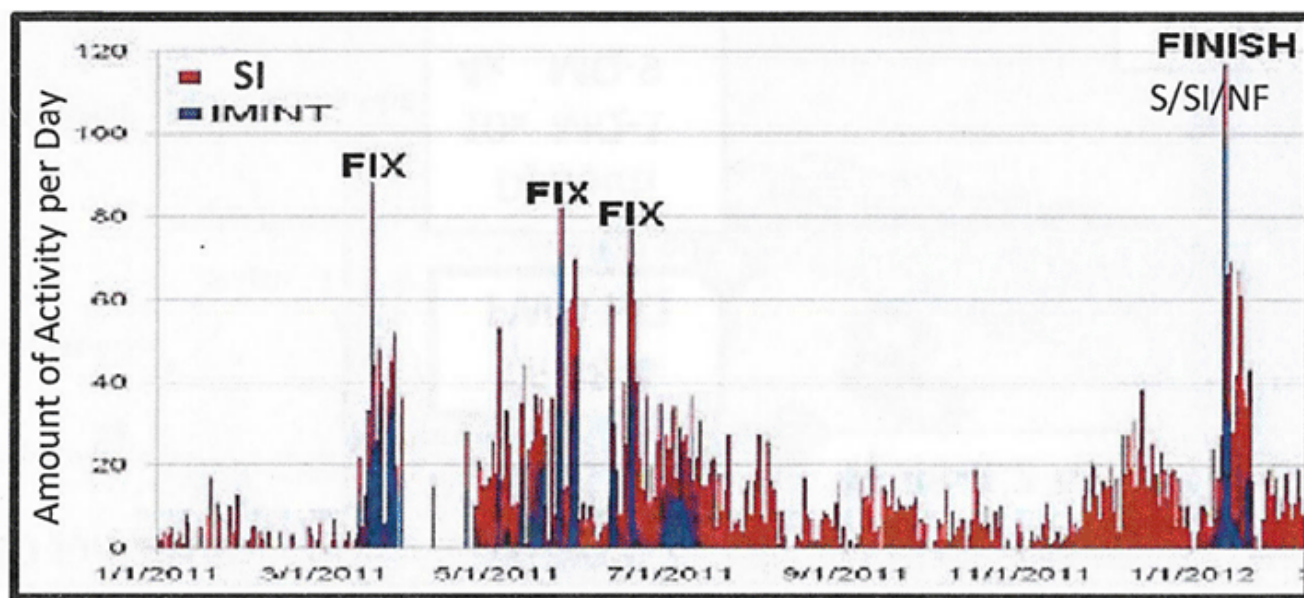
This is where they sit.



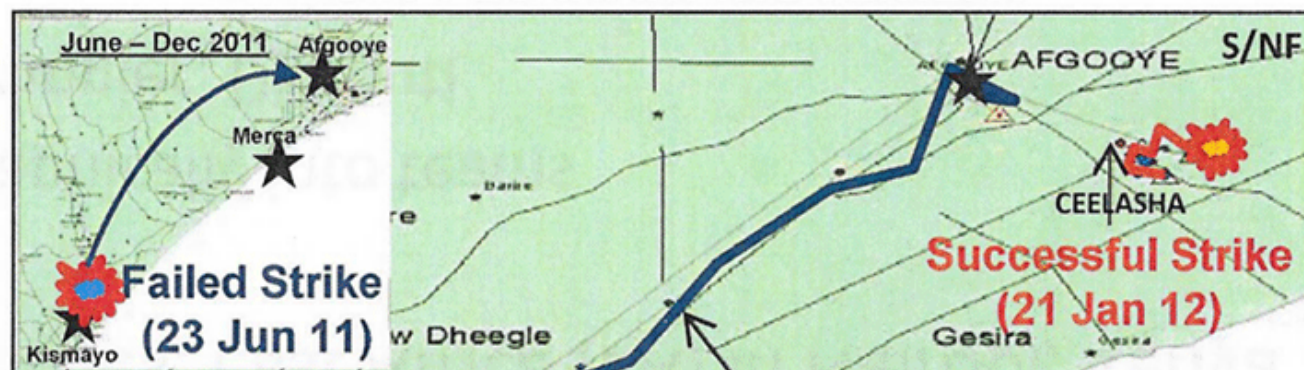
OBJECTIVES →

Most of the time, drone operators are trying to kill someone specific. They call these people—the people being hunted—“objectives.”

What does an objective look like? Here's an example.



OBJ PECKHAM MOVEMENT



FINISH

Kill/Capture or neutralization of an enemy Target

- **(S/NF) 21 Jan 2012: OBJ PECKHAM was eliminated via kinetic strike**
 - 0359: White SUV enters CEL-012 (OBJ PECKHAM NAI)
 - 0502: Adult with heavy strides and slight limp (OBJ PECKHAM)
 - 0811: Vehicle follow begins
 - 1039: Full Register/Match (SI)
 - 1103: Strike
 - 1131: Full Reg (SI)
 - 1254: Continue to monitor the scene

S/NF

This timeline was for a man named Bilal el-Berjawi. Intelligence agencies watched him for years, then the British government stripped him of his citizenship.

After calling his wife, who had just given birth in a London hospital, Berjawi was killed by an American drone strike. Some people thought the call might have given away his location, but the drones already knew where he was.

This was his car.



JACKPOT →

When drone operators hit their target, killing the person they intend to kill, that person is called a “jackpot.”

When they miss their target and end up killing someone else, they label that person EKIA, or “enemy killed in action.”



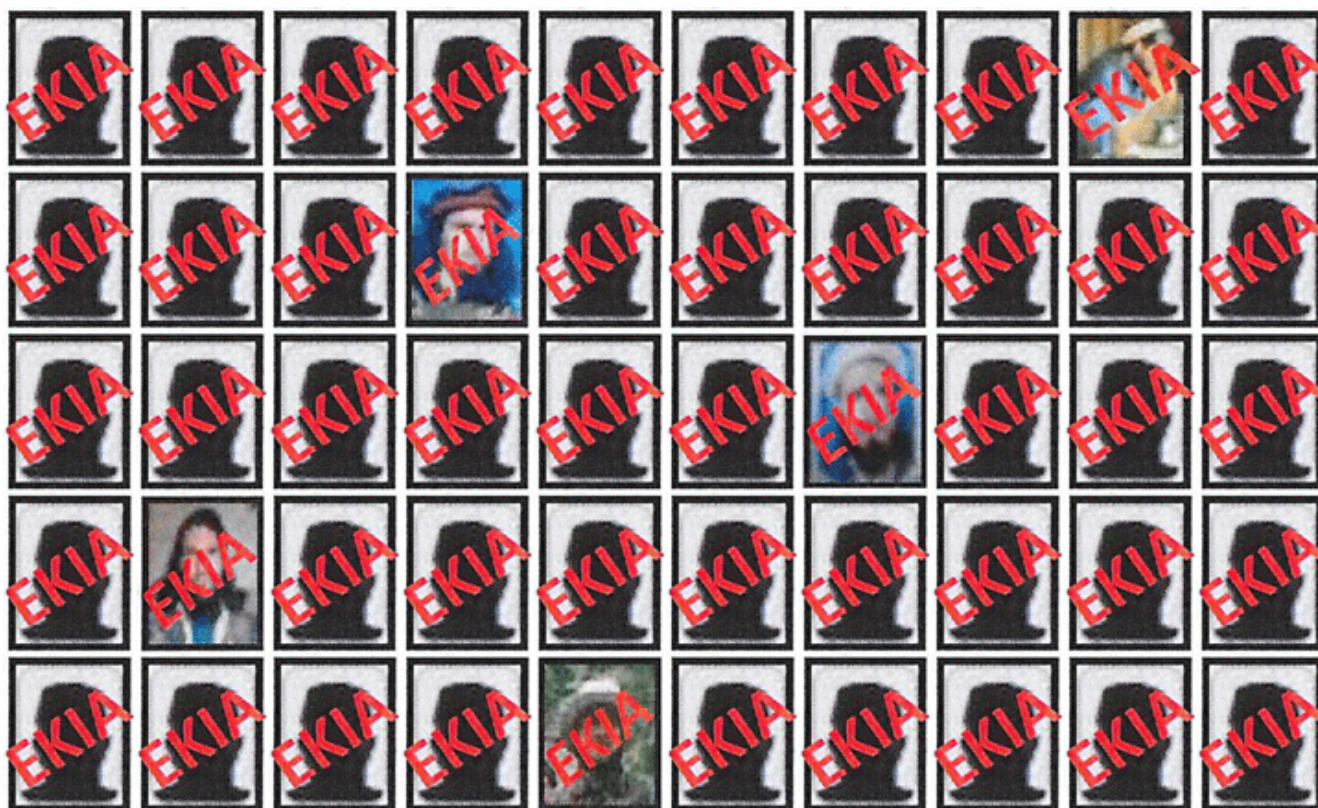
EKIA →

Over a five-month period, U.S. forces used drones and other aircraft to kill 155 people in northeastern Afghanistan. They achieved 19 jackpots. Along the way, they killed at least 136 other people, all of whom were classified as EKIA, or enemies killed in action.

HAYMAKER Operations (01 May – 15 Sep 2012)					
Type	# Ops	EKIA	Detainees	JP	%
Enabled Ops	27	2	61	13	48%
Kinetic Strikes	27	155	N/A	19	70%
Total	54	157	61	32	

Note the “%” column. It is the number of jackpots (JPs) divided by the number of operations. A 70 percent success rate. But it ignores well over a hundred other people killed along the way.

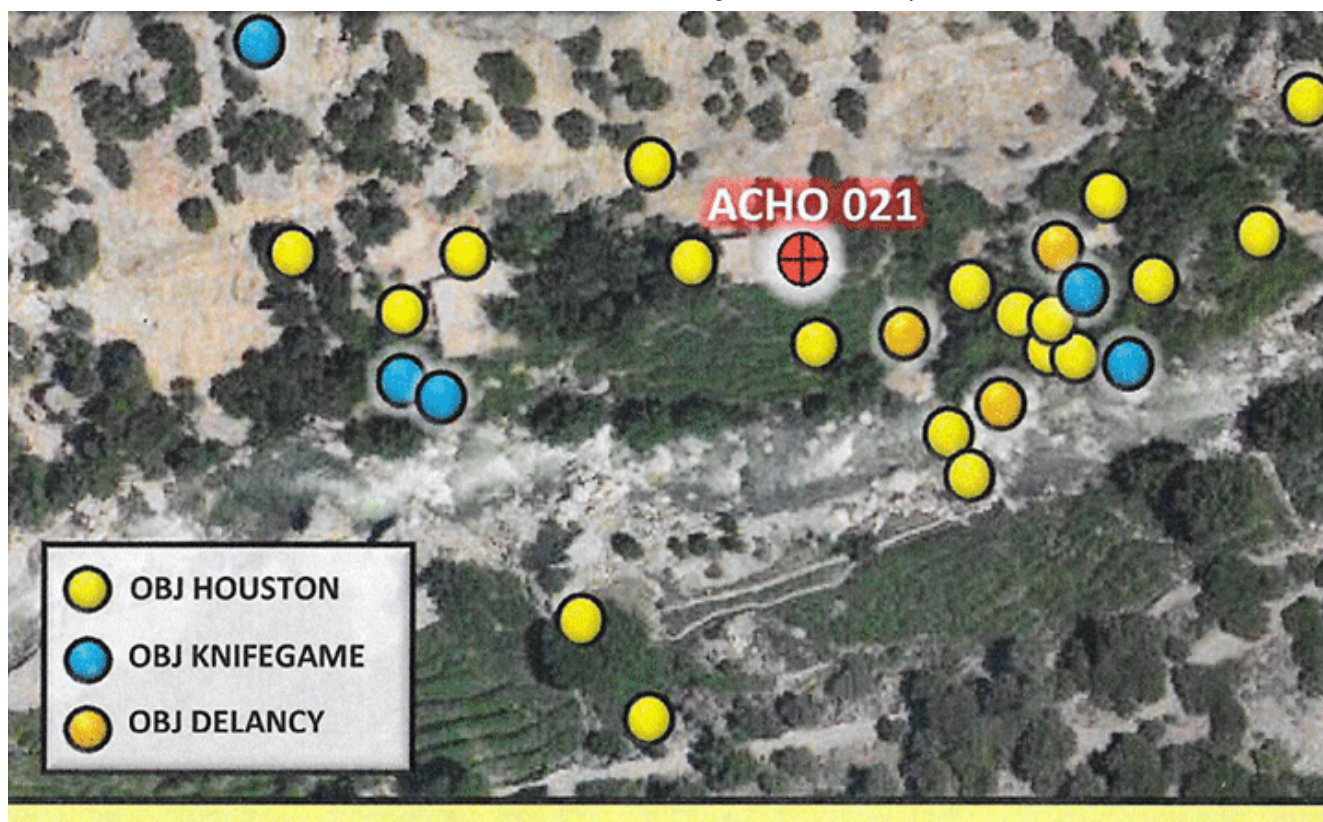
This means that almost 9 out of 10 people killed in these strikes were not the intended targets.



TOUCHDOWN →

Hellfire missiles—the explosives fired from drones—are not always fired at people. In fact, most drone strikes are aimed at phones. The SIM card provides a person's location—when turned on, a phone can become a deadly proxy for the individual being hunted.

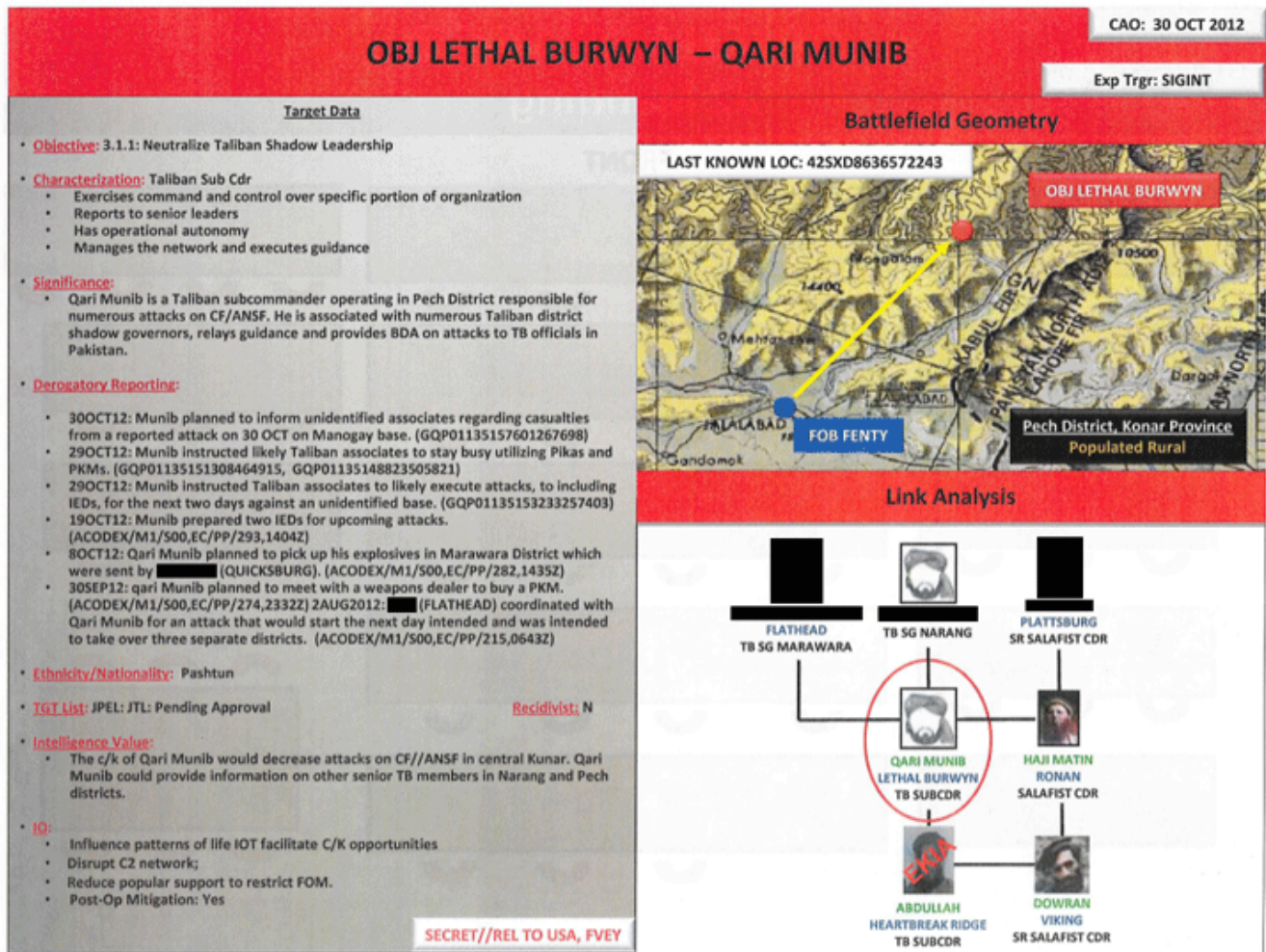
When a night raid or drone strike successfully neutralizes a target's phone, operators call that a “touchdown.”



BASEBALL CARD →

“Baseball cards” (BBCs) are the military’s method for visualizing information—they are used to display data, map relationships between people, and identify an individual’s so-called pattern of life.

This isn’t quite what a baseball card looks like, but they are said to include much of the following information.



Objective

BLINK →

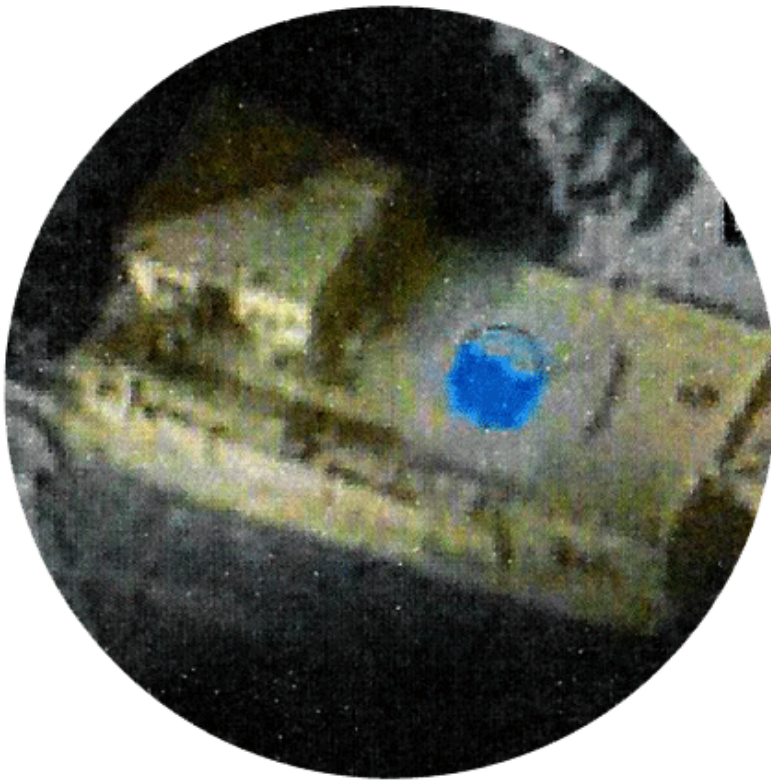
A “blink” happens when a drone has to move and there isn’t another aircraft to continue watching a target. According to classified documents, this is a major challenge facing the military, which always wants to have a “persistent stare.”

HOA ISR Orbits

Finding: A key factor in Find/Fix failures is the frequent inability to maintain 24/7 **persistent stare** on active mission areas, especially when ISR is massed for Finishes

Recommendation: Support Combatant Command (CCMD) requirements for additional ISR orbits to help prevent “blinking” on HVIs during demand surges

The conceptual metaphor of surveillance is seeing. Perfect surveillance would be like having a lidless eye. Much of what is seen by a drone’s camera, however, appears without context on the ground. Some drone operators describe watching targets as “looking through a soda straw.”



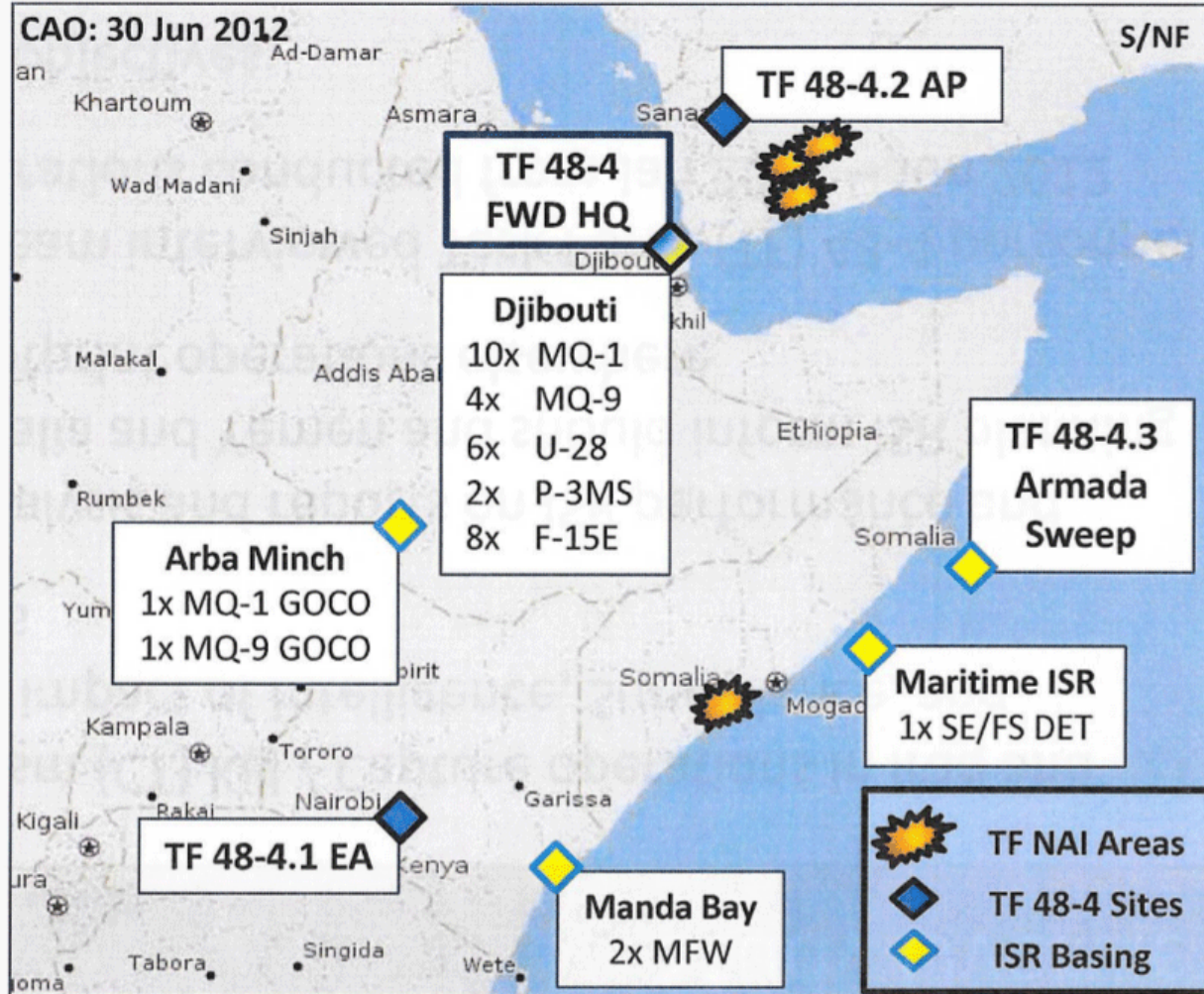
FOOTPRINT →

Drones are not magic. They have to take off from somewhere. Increasingly that somewhere is on the continent of Africa.

But where exactly?

As of 2012, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) had bases in Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia. They operated 11 Predators and five Reaper drones over the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

TF 48-4 Theater Footprint



* Subsequent to data collection and interviews for this study, flight operations are being shifted from Camp Lemonnier

4

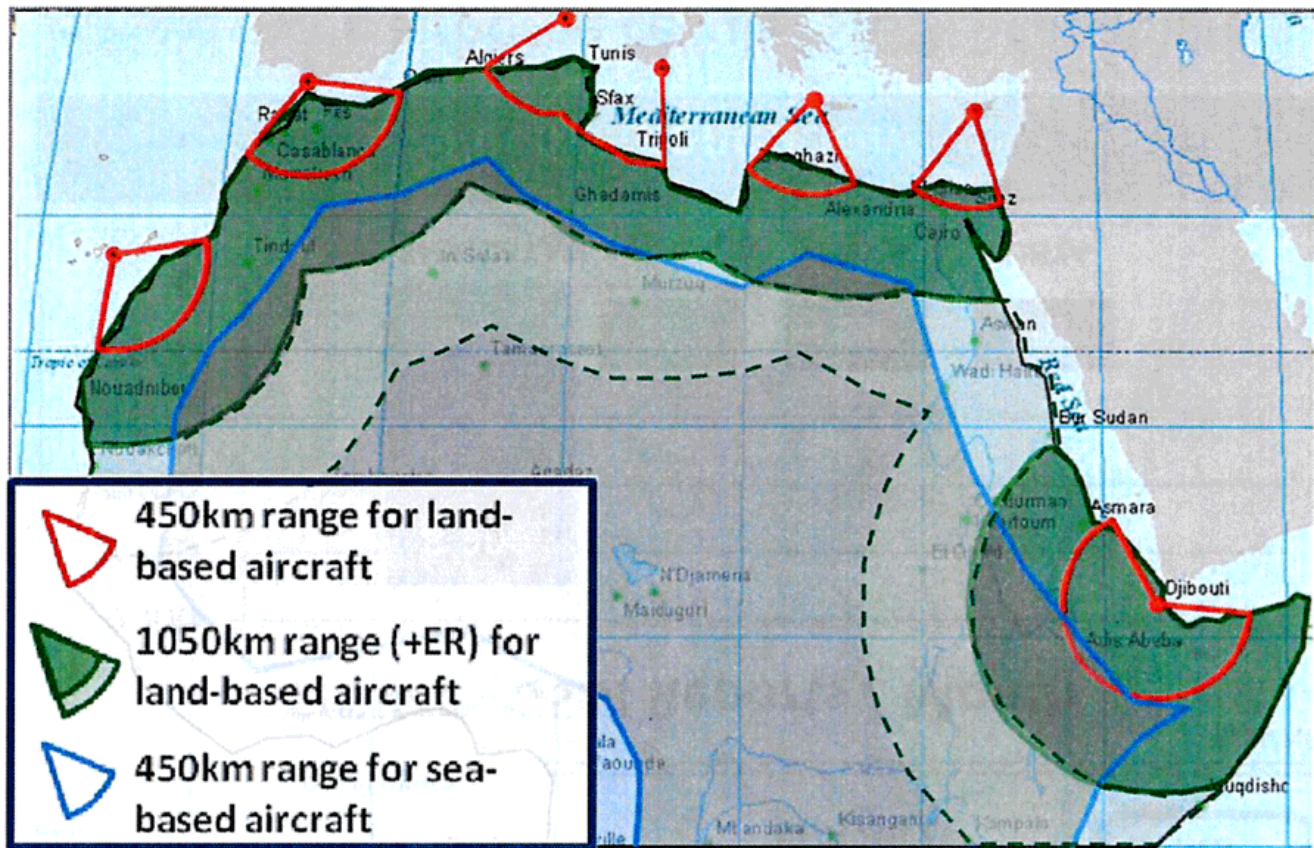
After crashing multiple Predator drones near Camp Lemonnier, the U.S. military moved operations to a more remote airstrip in Chabelley, Djibouti.



Chabelley, Djibouti. November 2014. Photo: Google Earth

Here's a snapshot of how the U.S. views its surveillance capabilities on the continent of Africa more broadly.

Transit Ranges from US/NATO Bases*

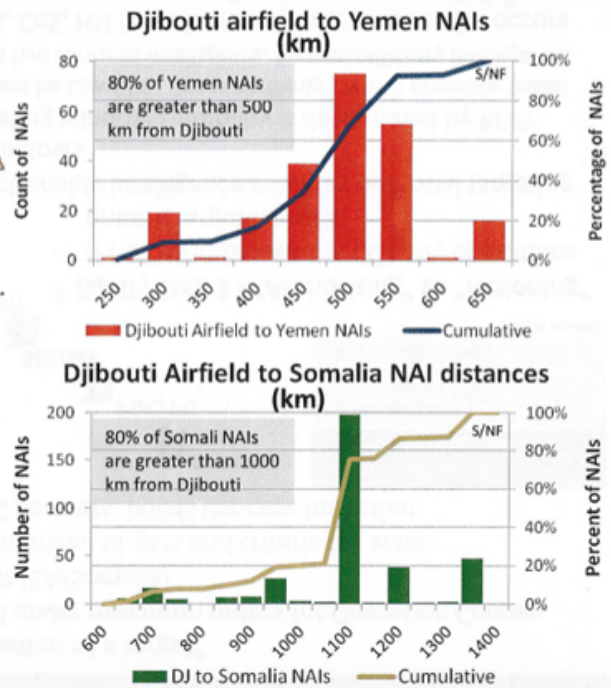
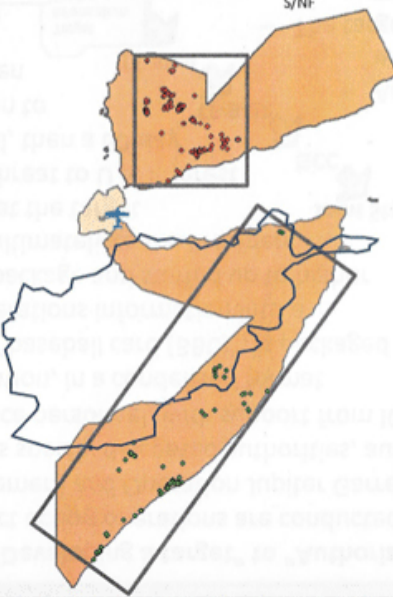


ORBITS →

The military worries about what it calls the “tyranny of distance.” Compared to the traditional battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. drones have to travel farther to reach their “named areas of interest,” or NAIs, in Yemen and Somalia.

► (S/NF) Somali NAIs are more distant and more dispersed than Yemeni NAIs

- In Yemen there are 225 NAIs with an average distance of 471 km from CLDJ
- In Somalia there are 362 NAIs with an average distance of 1065 km



Here's where the U.S. appears to have “finished” people in Yemen.

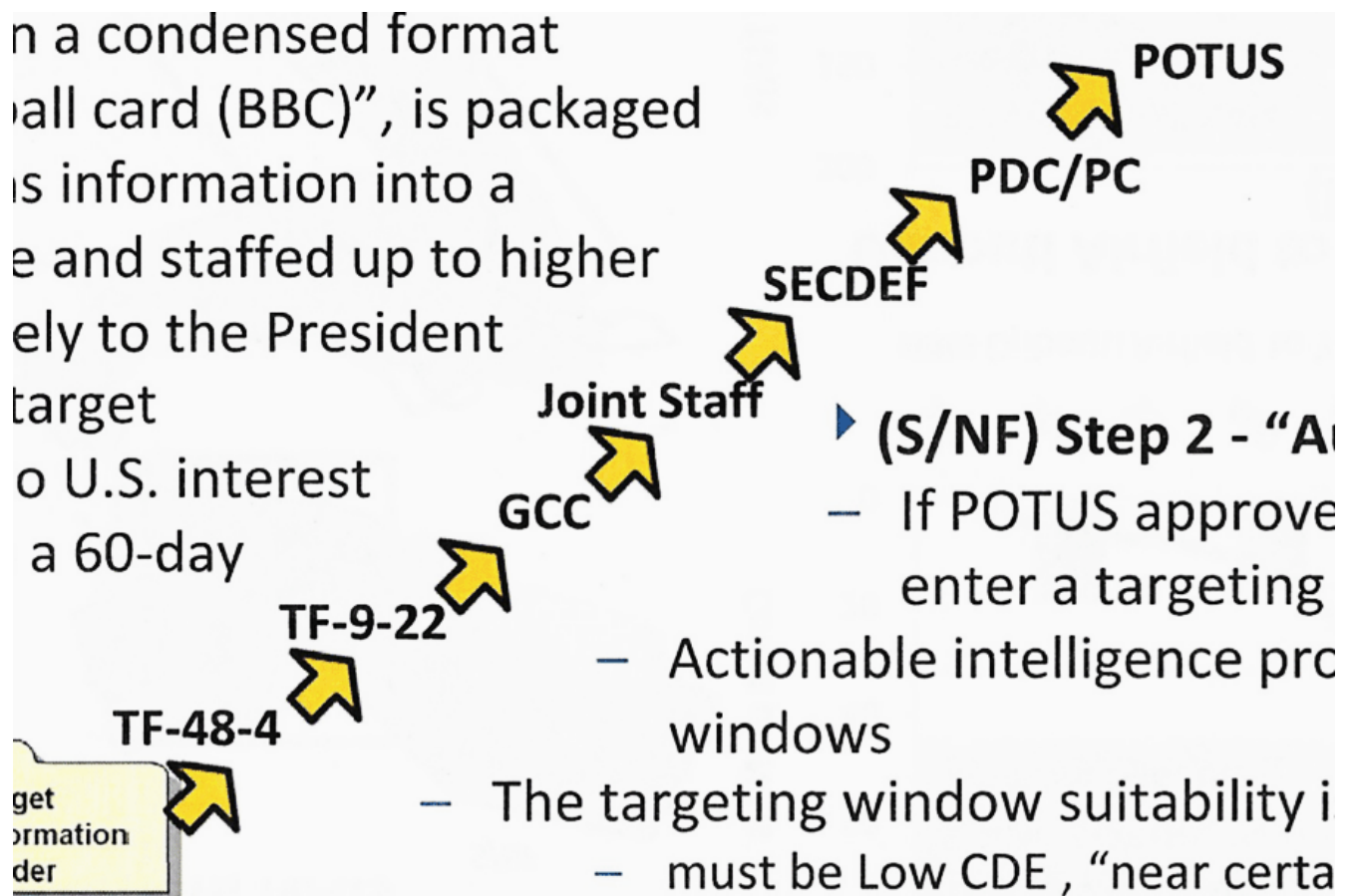


KILL CHAIN →

For many years, lawyers and human rights advocates have wondered about the chain of command. How are non-battlefield assassinations authorized?

Does it fall within the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), or through some other authority?

The documents we have are not comprehensive, but they suggest a linear chain—all the way up to the president of the United States (POTUS).



WATCHLIST →

As we reported last year, U.S. intelligence agencies hunt people primarily on the basis of their cellphones. Equipped with a simulated cell tower called GIL-

GAMESH, a drone can force a target's phone to lock onto it, and subsequently use the phone's signals to triangulate that person's location.

Here is what a watchlist looks like.

TOP SECRET//COMINT

Geolocation - Watchlist (U)

IMS=418055457 **IMEI=35196003** **ACTION=WARN** **COMMENT=05187-** (TFN-M)(TFT)(NFN-N)

Handset Serial Number|SIM Card Number|Dissemination Info|Last 5 of phone number-Target name (Requesting SU)

TOP SECRET SCI

Handset Serial Number	SIM Card Number	Dissemination Info	Last 5 of phone number-Target name (Requesting SU)
IMS1-418055457	IMEI=35196003	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=05187- (TFN-M)(TFT)(NFN-N)
IMS1-418201060	IMEI=35426802	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=58302- (BPC)
IMS1-418300100	IMEI=35684202	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=00400- (TFB)
IMS1-418054700	IMEI=35893000	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=25710- (TFB)
IMS1-418300900	IMEI=35504600	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=70462- (SOTF-W)
IMS1-418300100	IMEI=35938000	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=18183- (OGA/CTTAC)(TF7-48)
IMS1-418054310	IMEI=35681500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=18807- (TFB)(OGA/CTTAC)
IMS1-418058110	IMEI=35603300	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=20449- (SOTF-W)
IMS1-418300500	IMEI=35805100	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=85407- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418203130	IMEI=35352600	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=14055- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054770	IMEI=35685700	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=06372- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054700	IMEI=35576400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=74754- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418202020	IMEI=35507000	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=31097- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054350	IMEI=35222100	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=98998- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054000	IMEI=35937000	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=42037- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054700	IMEI=35264400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=39028- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054540	IMEI=35436500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=04505- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054570	IMEI=35572800	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=33958- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418054310	IMEI=35519600	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=13465- (TF7-48)
IMS1-418201160	IMEI=35193200	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=70373- (KNOXVILLE) (TFB)
IMS1-418053210	IMEI=35797900	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=04312- (TFB)
IMS1-418053400	IMEI=35688700	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=66026- (TFB)(DO NOT STRIKE)
IMS1-418054580	IMEI=35425000	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=08690- (TFB)
IMS1-418300400	IMEI=35933500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=10681- (ACB)
IMS1-418056100	IMEI=35938500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=90966- (NFN-N)(ACB)
IMS1-418051900	IMEI=35219300	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=84739- (NFN)
IMS1-418054210	IMEI=35797900	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=72135- (NFN)
IMS1-418056100	IMEI=35826500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=48166- (NFN)
IMS1-418054620	IMEI=35641300	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=29983- (TFE)
IMS1-418054100	IMEI=35644700	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=97834- (TFE)
IMS1-418209090	IMEI=35163400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=26286- (TFE)
IMS1-418055100	IMEI=35229800	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=72919- (TFE)
IMS1-418201000	IMEI=35799400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=63603- (TFE)
IMS1-418054100	IMEI=35799400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=10547- (TFE)
IMS1-418054160	IMEI=35799400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=26275- (TFE)
IMS1-418053100	IMEI=35936500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=67265- (TFE)
IMS1-418053600	IMEI=35694800	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=84776- (TFE)
IMS1-418054160	IMEI=35694800	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=84776- (TFE)
IMS1-418054400	IMEI=35229800	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=72919- (TFE)
IMS1-418055100	IMEI=35799400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=63603- (TFE)
IMS1-418053100	IMEI=35799400	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=26275- (TFE)
IMS1-418054160	IMEI=35936500	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=67265- (TFE)
IMS1-418055300	IMEI=35883700	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=93131- (TFE)
IMS1-418055300	IMEI=35694800	ACTION=WARN	COMMENT=84776- (TFE)

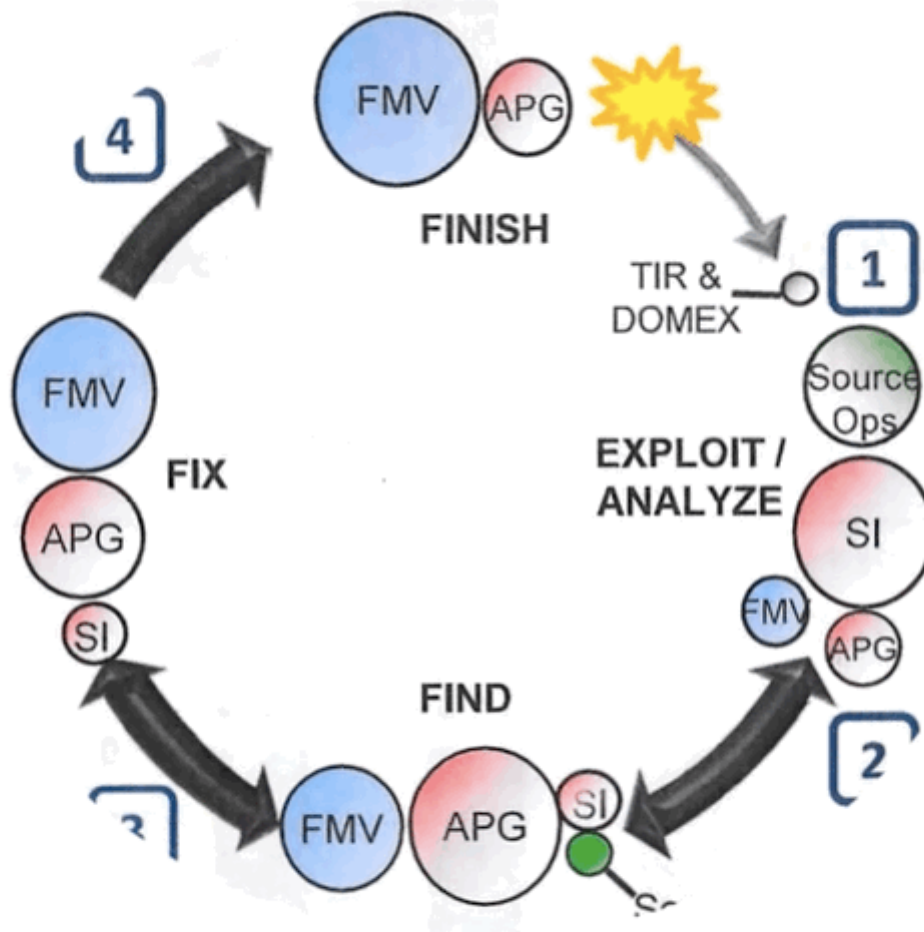
TOP SECRET SCI

FIND, FIX, FINISH →


In the end, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) is about continuing a cycle: Find a person, Fix a person, Finish them. But there are two other steps in the process: Exploit and Analyze.

Colloquially referred to as "F3EA," the cycle feeds back into itself. The whole process amounts to human hunting. As soon as a target is finished, the hunt

for a new target begins.



1. With thanks to Sven Lindqvist's *A History of Bombing*, which served as a template for this narrative. Additional design and illustration by Evan Bissell.

Additional reporting:  **Jeremy Scahill**



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CONTINUE READING THE DRONE PAPERS

01.



THE ASSASSINATION COMPLEX

Jeremy Scahill

The whistleblower who leaked the drone papers believes the public is entitled to know how people are placed on kill lists and assassinated on orders from the president.

02.

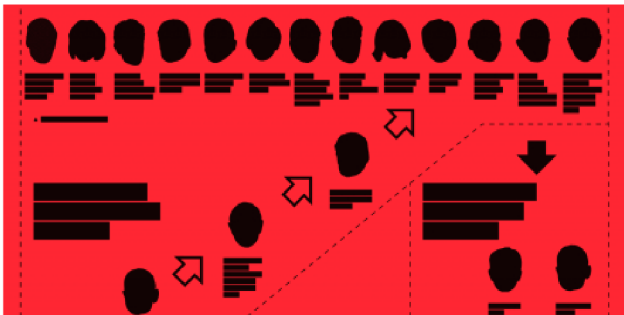


A VISUAL GLOSSARY

Josh Begley

Decoding the language of covert warfare.

03.



THE KILL CHAIN

Cora Currier

New details about the secret criteria for drone strikes and how the White House approves targets.

04.



FIND, FIX, FINISH

Jeremy Scahill

The tip of the spear in the Obama administration's ramped up wars in Somalia and Yemen was a special operations task force called TF 48-4.

05.

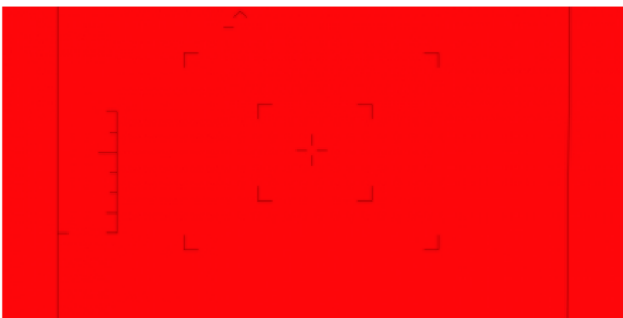


MANHUNTING IN THE HINDU KUSH

Ryan Devereaux

Leaked documents detailing a multi-year U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan reveal the strategic limits and startling human costs of drone warfare.

06.



FIRING BLIND

Cora Currier, Peter Maass

A secret Pentagon study highlights the chronic flaws in intelligence used for drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia.

07.

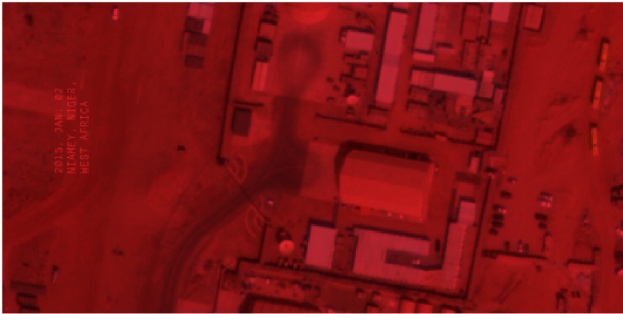


THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OBJECTIVE PECKHAM

Ryan Gallagher

For years Bilal el-Berjawi traveled freely from the U.K. to Somalia under the watchful eyes of intelligence services. Then the U.S. killed him with a drone strike.

08.



TARGET AFRICA

Nick Turse

To reduce the “tyranny of distance,” drones fly from bases in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Navy ships.

09. GLOSSARY

THE ALPHABET OF ASSASSINATION

A guide to the acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms used in *The Drone Papers*.

10. DOCUMENTS

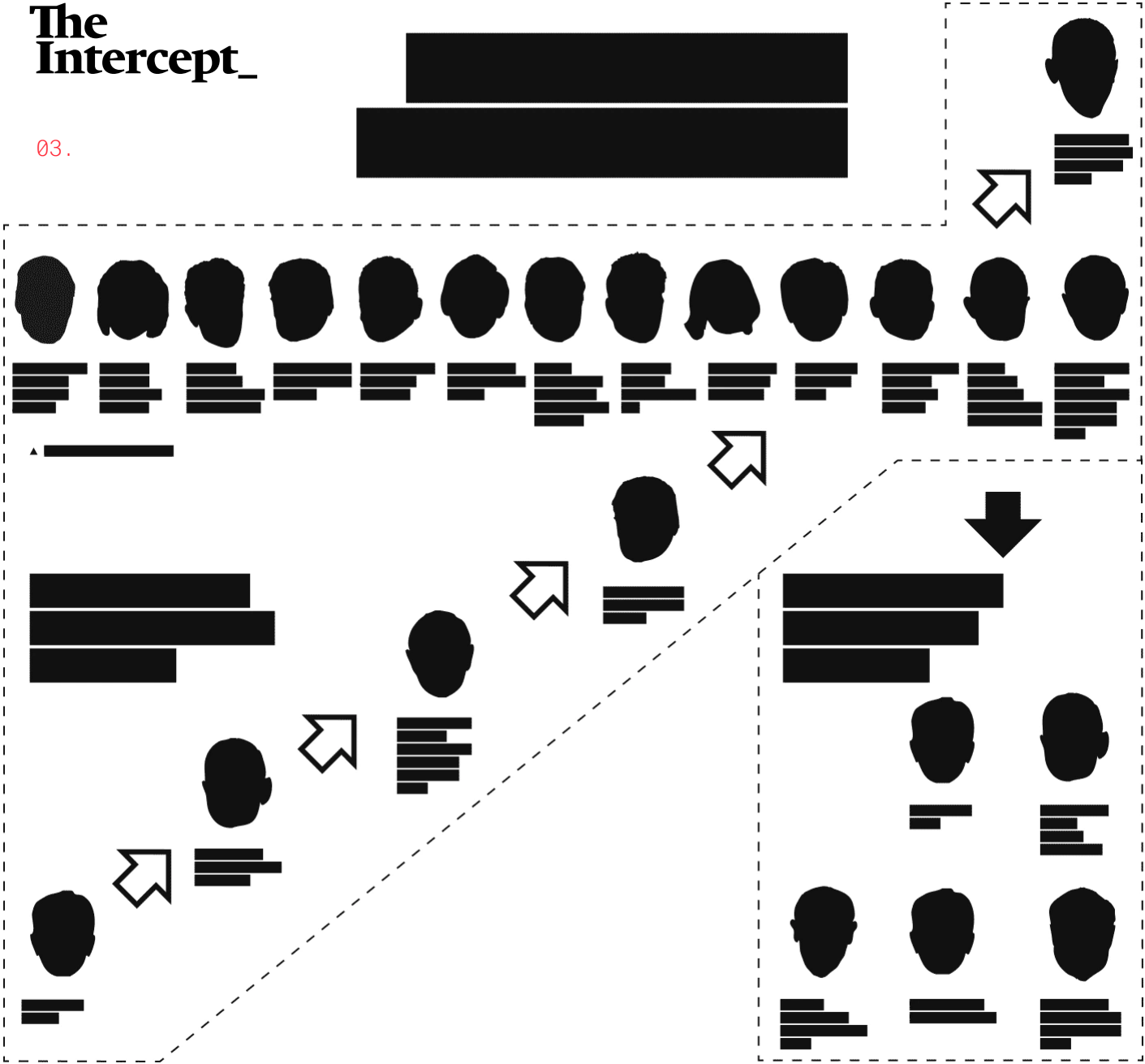
SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 2/13 SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 5/13 OPERATION HAYMAKER

GEOLOCATION WATCHLIST

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The Intercept_

03.



ARTICLE №3 OF 8

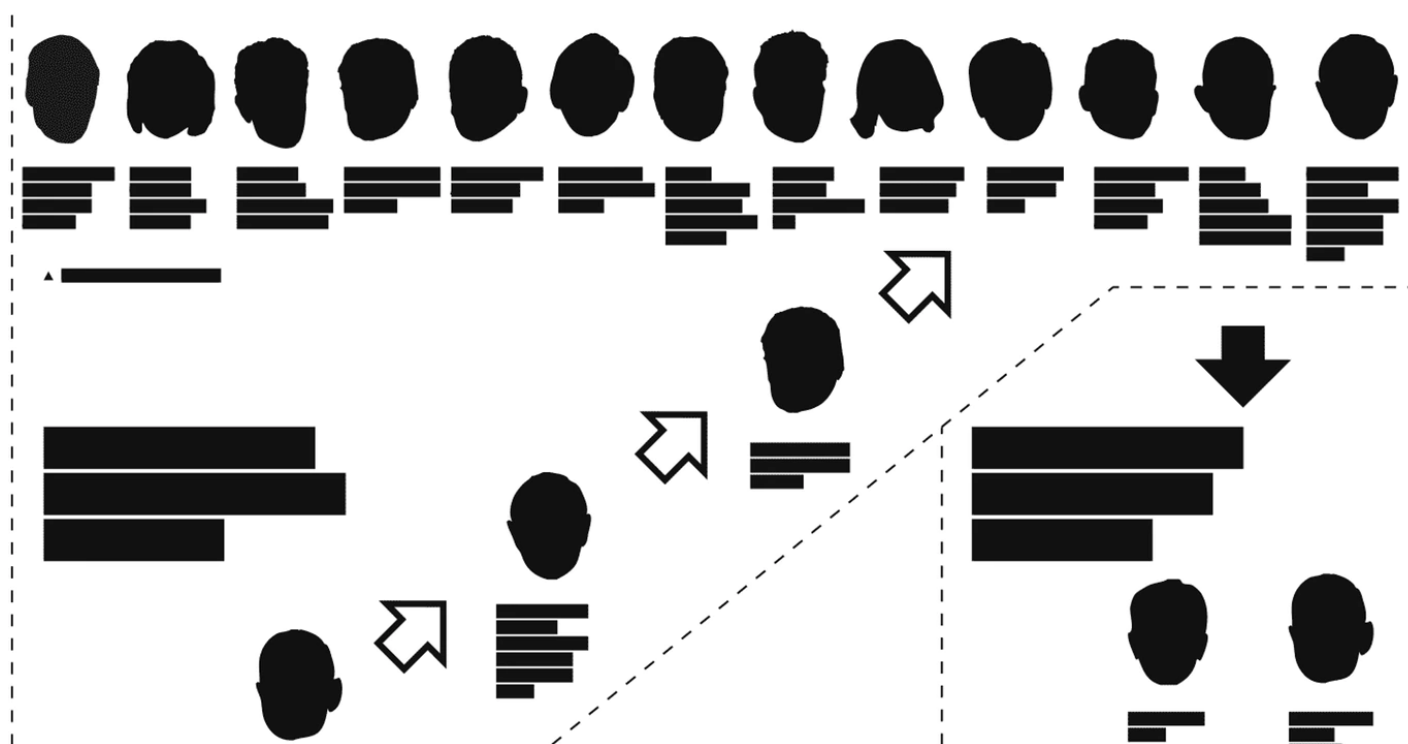
THE
DRONE
PAPERS



Cora Currier

October 15 2015, 4:57 a.m.

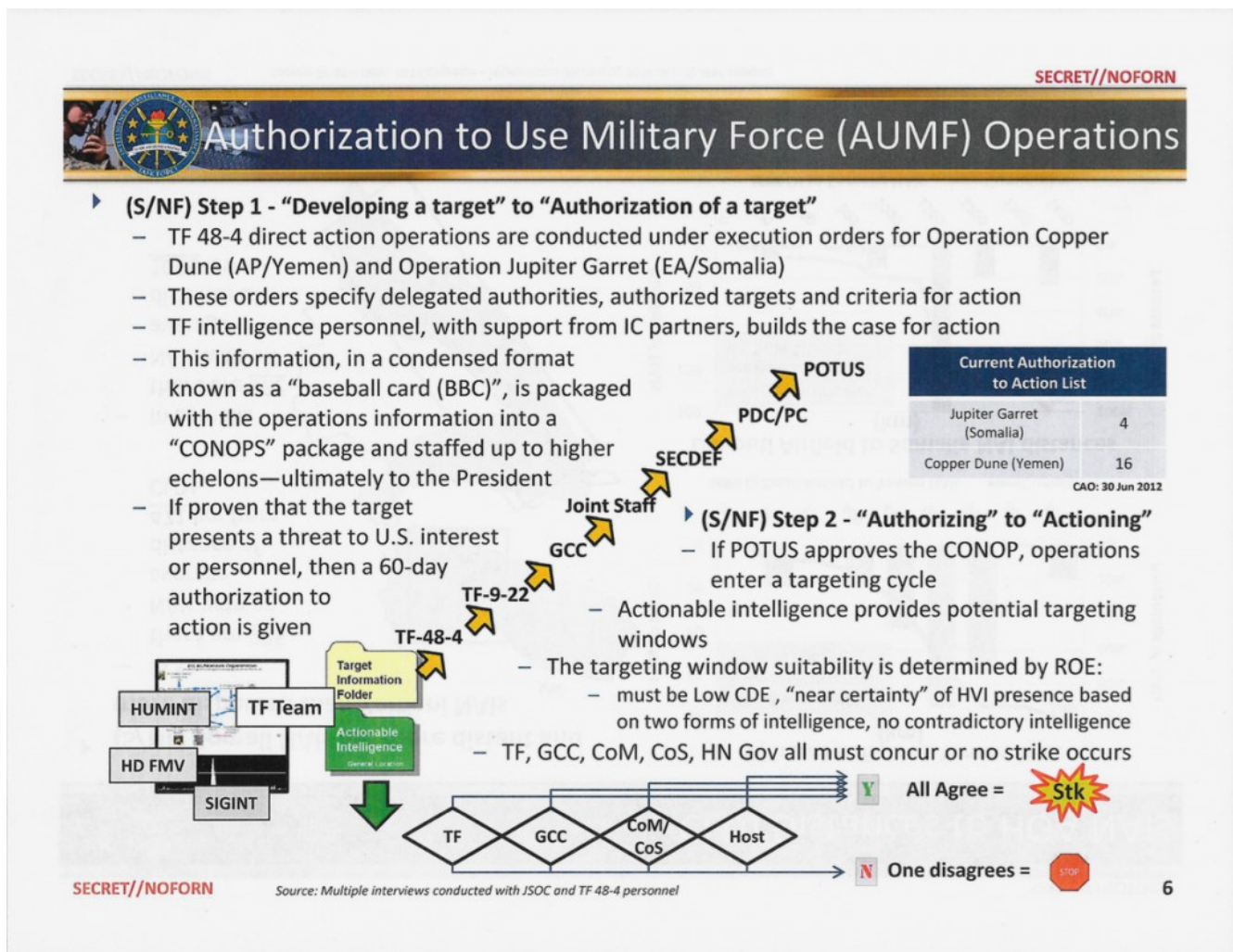
Secret military documents obtained by *The Intercept* offer rare documentary evidence of the process by which the Obama administration creates and acts on its kill list of terror suspects in Yemen and Somalia. The documents offer an unusual glimpse into the decision-making process behind the drone strikes and other operations of the largely covert war, outlining the selection and vetting of targets through the ranks of the military and the White House, culminating in the president's approval of a 60-day window for lethal action.



THE DOCUMENTS COME FROM **a Pentagon study**, circulated in early 2013, evaluating the intelligence and surveillance technology behind the military's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) killing campaign in Yemen and Somalia in 2011 and 2012.

The study, carried out by the Pentagon's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Task Force, illuminates and in some cases contradicts the administration's public description of a campaign directed at high-level terrorists who pose an imminent threat to the United States. It admits frankly that capturing terrorists is a rare occurrence and hints at the use of so-called signature strikes against unknown individuals exhibiting suspicious behavior.

The Intercept obtained two versions of the study, a **longer presentation** dated February 2013, and an **executive summary** from May 2013, which includes a slide showing the chain of command leading to the approval of a lethal strike.



A slide from a May 2013 Pentagon presentation shows the chain of command for ordering drone strikes and other operations carried out by JSOC in Yemen and Somalia. GCC = Geographic Combatant Command; SECDEF = Secretary of Defense; PDC/PC = Principals' Deputies Committee/Principals Committee; CoM = Chief of Mission; CoS = Chief of Station

The Obama administration has been loath to declassify even the legal rationale for drone strikes – let alone detail the bureaucratic structure revealed in these documents. Both the CIA and JSOC conduct drone strikes in Yemen, and very little has been officially disclosed about either the military's or the spy agency's operations.

“The public has a right to know who's making these decisions, who decides who is a legitimate target, and on what basis that decision is made,” said Jameel Jaffer, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Both the Pentagon and the National Security Council declined to respond to detailed questions about the study and about the drone program more generally. The NSC would not say if the process for approving targets or strikes had changed since the study was produced.

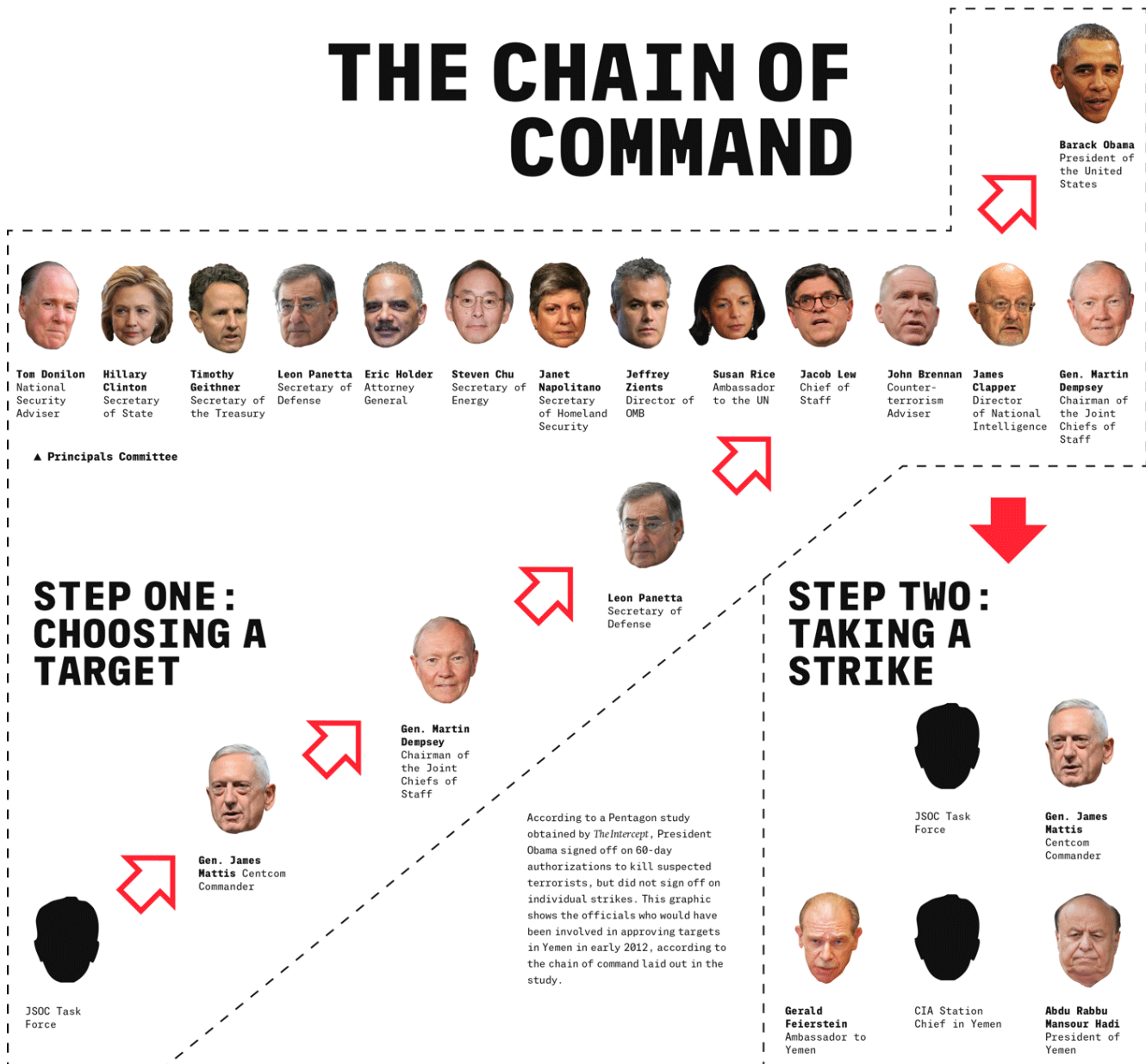
TWO STEPS TO A KILL

The May 2013 [slide](#) describes a two-part process of approval for an attack: step one, “‘Developing a target’ to ‘Authorization of a target,’” and step two, “‘Authorizing’ to ‘Actioning.’” According to the slide, intelligence personnel from JSOC's Task Force 48-4, working alongside other intelligence agencies, would build the case for action against an individual, eventually generating a “baseball card” on the target, which was “staffed up to higher echelons – ultimately to the president.”

The intelligence package on the person being targeted passed from the JSOC task force tracking him to the command in charge of the region – Centcom for Yemen, and Africom for Somalia – and then to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, followed by the secretary of defense. It was then examined by a circle of top advisers known as the Principals Committee of

the National Security Council, and their seconds in command, known collectively as the Deputies Committee.

The slide detailing the kill chain indicates that while Obama approved each target, he did not approve each individual strike, although news accounts have previously reported that the president **personally** “signs off” on strikes outside of Afghanistan or Pakistan. However, the slide does appear to be consistent with Obama’s **comment** in 2012 that “ultimately I’m responsible for the process.”



Illustrations: The Intercept

Photo: Feierstein: Landov; all other photos: Getty Images

There have been various accounts of this drone bureaucracy, and almost all stress the role of Obama's influential counterterrorism adviser John Brennan (who became director of the CIA in 2013) and of top administration lawyers in deciding who could be killed. Under Brennan, the nominations process was reportedly concentrated in the White House, **replacing** video conferences once run by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and **elevating** the role of the National Counterterrorism Center in organizing intelligence. Later in 2013, the White House **reportedly** tightened control over individual strikes in Yemen.

At the time of the study, with the president's approval, JSOC had a 60-day window to hit a target. For the actual strike, the task force needed approval from the Geographic Combatant Command as well as the ambassador and CIA station chief in the country where the target was located. For a very important target, such as al Qaeda-linked preacher Anwar al Awlaki, who was a U.S. citizen, "it would take a high-level official to approve the strike," said Lt. Col. Mark McCurley, a former drone pilot who worked on operations in Yemen and recently published a **book about his experiences**. "And that includes a lot of lawyers and a lot of review at different levels to reach that decision. We have an extensive chain of command, humans along the whole link that monitor the entire process from start to finish on an airstrike." The country's government was also supposed to sign off. "One Disagrees = STOP," the slide notes, with a tiny red stop sign.

In practice, the degree of cooperation with the host nation has varied. Somalia's minister of national security, Abdirizak Omar Mohamed, told *The Intercept* that the United States alerted Somalia's president and foreign minister of strikes "sometimes ahead of time, sometimes during the operation ... normally we get advance notice." He said he was unaware of an instance where Somali officials had objected to a strike, but added that if they did, he assumed the U.S. would respect Somalia's sovereignty.

By 2011, when the study's time frame began, Yemen's president Ali Abdullah Saleh was in crisis. Facing domestic protests during the Arab Spring, he left the country in June 2011 after being injured in a bombing. Both the CIA and JSOC stepped up their drone campaigns, which enjoyed **vocal support** from Saleh's eventual successor, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

"It was almost never coordinated with Saleh. Once Hadi became president, March 2012, there was a big chance we'd be in the loop" before drone strikes were conducted, said a former senior Yemeni official who worked for both the Saleh and Hadi governments.

Today, with Yemen's capital under the control of the Houthi rebel group and undergoing bombardment by Saudi Arabia, administration lawyers **do not seem worried** about asking permission to carry out drone strikes amid the fray.

"Now, I think they don't even bother telling anyone. There is really no one in charge to tell," said the former Yemeni official, who requested anonymity citing current unrest and the fact that he no longer works for the government.

WHO CAN BE TARGETED

Both the Bush and Obama administrations have maintained that the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, or AUMF, permits the pursuit of members of al Qaeda and its affiliates wherever they may be located.

The Pentagon study refers throughout to operations that fall under AUMF. But it also underlines how the targeted killing campaigns differ

from traditional battlefields, **noting** that the region is located “Outside a Defined Theater of Active Armed Conflict,” which limits “allowable U.S. activities.”

Obama administration officials **have said** that in addition to being a member of al Qaeda or an associated force, targets must also pose a significant threat to the United States. In May 2013, facing increasing pressure to fully admit the existence of the drone war and especially to address allegations of civilian harm, the White House **released** policy guidelines for lethal counterterrorism operations that seemed to further restrict them. In a **speech**, Obama announced that action would be taken only against people who posed a “continuing, imminent threat to the American people,” and who could not be captured. A strike would only occur with “near certainty” that no civilians would be killed or injured.

Even with the new guidelines, **legal observers**, particularly **human rights lawyers**, have disputed the Obama administration's position that the U.S., in strict legal terms, is in an armed conflict with al Qaeda in Yemen or Somalia – and therefore dispute what standards should apply to strikes. Others question the extent to which the hundreds of people killed in drone strikes in those countries meet the supposedly strict criteria.

“I think there can be questions raised about how stringently some of the requirements are being applied,” said Jennifer Daskal, an assistant professor of law at American University who worked for the Department of Justice from 2009 to 2011. “Near certainty of no civilian deaths, is that really imposed? What does it mean for capture not to be feasible? How hard do you have to try?”

It is not clear whether the study reflects the May policy guidance, since it does not give an extensive description of the criteria for approving a target, noting only that the target must be “a threat to U.S. interest or personnel.”

A spokesperson for the National Security Council would not explain why the standards in the study differed from the guidelines laid out in May 2013, but emphasized that “those guidelines remain in effect today.”

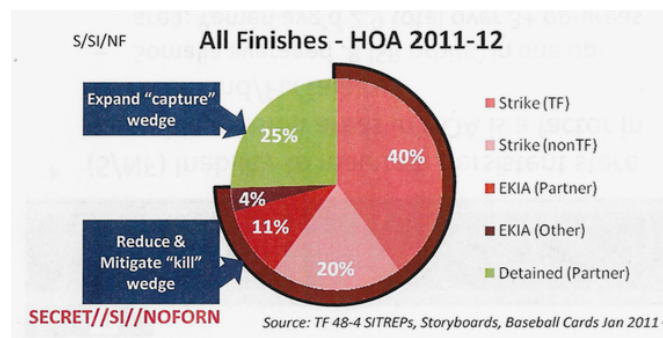
The two-month window for striking, says Hina Shamsi, director of the ACLU's National Security Project, shows the administration's broad interpretation of “a continuing, imminent threat.”

“If you have approval over a monthslong period, that sends the signal of a presumption that someone is always targetable, regardless of whether they are actually participating in hostilities,” said Shamsi.

The slide illustrating the chain of approval makes no mention of evaluating options for capture. It may be implied that those discussions are part of the target development process, but the omission reflects the brute facts beneath the Obama administration's stated preference for capture: Detention of marked targets is incredibly rare.

A **chart** in the study shows that in 2011 and 2012, captures accounted for only 25 percent of operations carried out in the Horn of Africa – and all were apparently by foreign forces. In one of the few publicized captures of the Obama presidency, al Shabaab commander Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame was **picked up in April 2011** by U.S. forces in the Gulf of Aden and brought to Manhattan for trial, though he may not be reflected in the study's figures because he was apprehended at sea.

The study does not contain an overall count of strikes or deaths, but it does note that “relatively few high-level terrorists meet criteria for targeting” and states that at the end of June 2012, there were 16 authorized



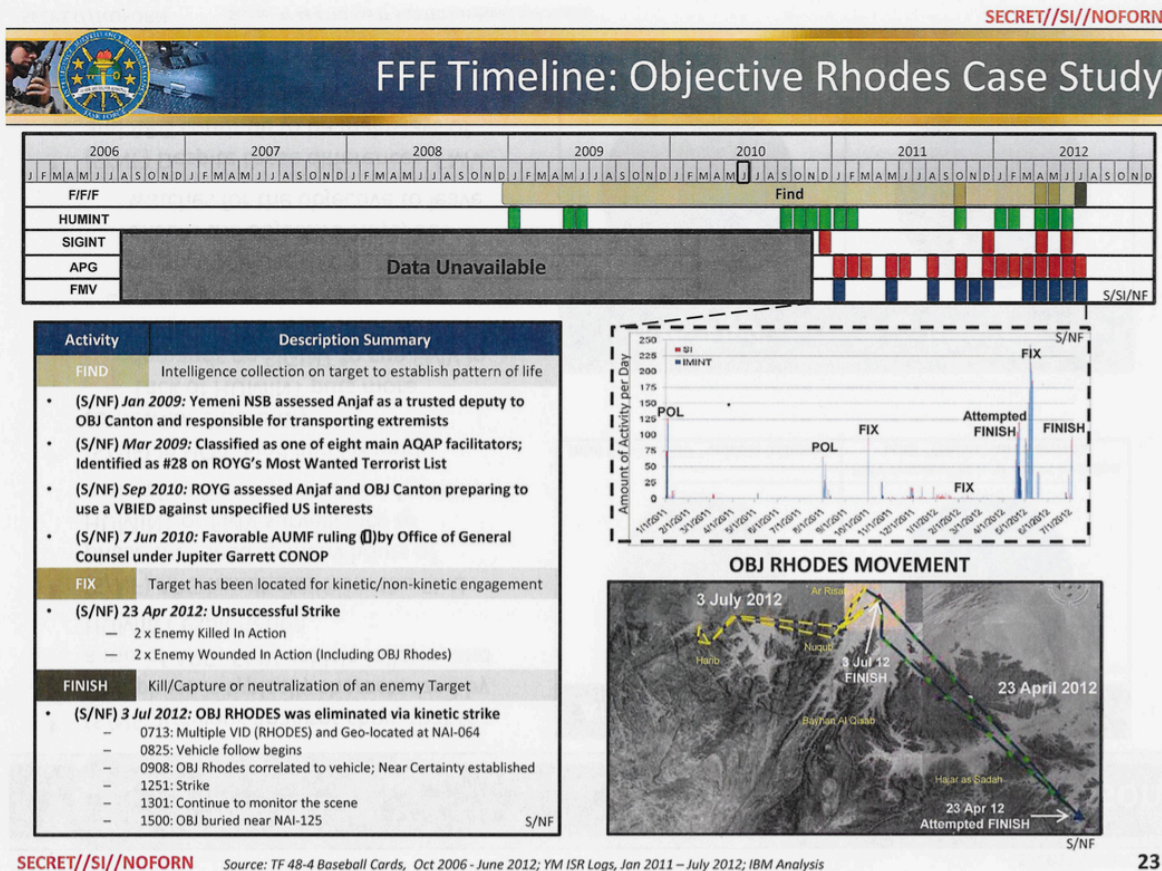
The Pentagon study recommended more captures, rather than killings, because of the intelli-

targets in Yemen and only four in Somalia.

gence that could be gleaned from interrogations and collected materials. EKIA = Enemy Killed in Action; HOA = Horn of Africa

Despite the small number of people on the kill list, in 2011 and 2012 there were at least 54 U.S. drone strikes and other attacks reported in Yemen, killing a minimum of 293 people, including 55 civilians, according to **figures compiled** by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. In Somalia, there were at least three attacks, **resulting in the deaths of at minimum six people**.

Some of those Yemen strikes were likely carried out by the CIA, which since mid-2011 has flown drones to Yemen from a **base in Saudi Arabia** and reportedly has **its own kill list and rules** for strikes. Yet it is also clear that the military sometimes harmed multiple other people in trying to kill one of those high-level targets. The study includes a **description** of the hunt for an alleged al Qaeda member referred to as “Objective Rhodes” or “Anjaf,” who is likely Fahd Saleh al-Anjaf al-Harithi, who was reported killed in July 2012, on the same day as Objective Rhodes. A failed strike on Harithi that April killed two “enemies.” News accounts at the time **reported** three “militants” had died.



A slide from February 2013 recounts the hunt for an alleged al Qaeda member (likely Fahd Saleh al-Anjaf al-Harithi) showing that two others died in a botched attempt to kill him.

The large number of reported strikes may also be a reflection of signature strikes in Yemen, where people can be targeted based on patterns of suspect behavior. In 2012, administration officials **said** that President Obama had approved strikes in Yemen on unknown people, **calling them TADS**, or “terror attack disruption strikes,” and claiming that they were more constrained than the CIA’s signature strikes in Pakistan.

The study **refers** to using drones and spy planes to “conduct TADS related network development,” presumably a reference to surveilling behavior patterns and relationships in order to carry out signature strikes. It is unclear what authorities govern such strikes, which undermine the

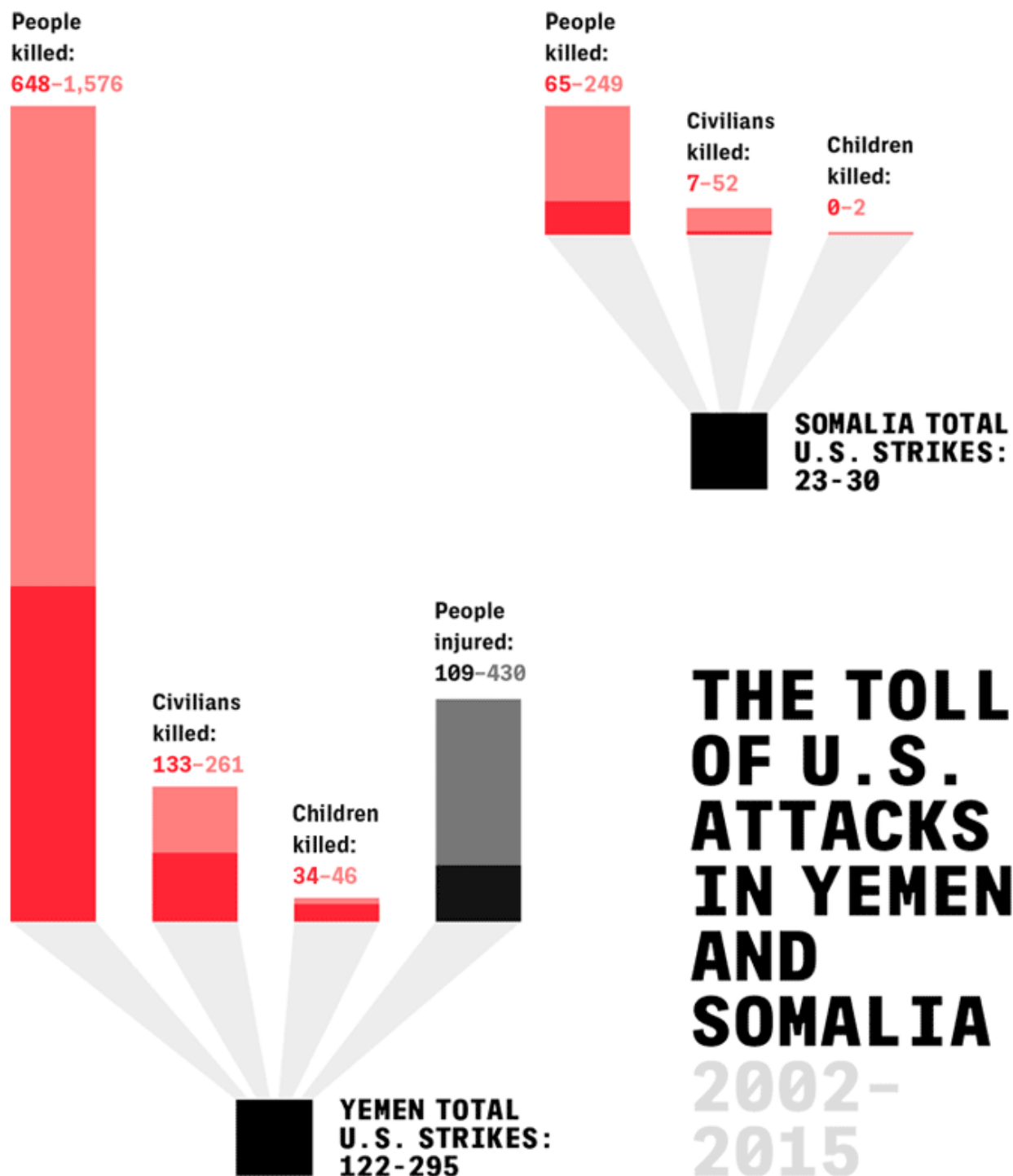
administration's insistence that the U.S. kills mainly "high-value" targets.

NEAR CERTAINTY

According to the White House guidelines released in May 2013, the decision to take a strike should be based on thorough surveillance and only occur in the absence of civilians. A strike requires "near certainty that the terrorist target is present" and "near certainty that non-combatants will not be injured or killed."

The study describes the rules for a strike slightly differently, stating that there must be a "low CDE [collateral damage environment]" – meaning a low estimate of how many innocent people might be harmed. It also states there must be "near certainty" that the target is present, "based on two forms of intelligence," with "no contradictory intelligence." In contrast to the White House statement, the "near certainty" standard is not applied to civilians.

The study **cites** the "need to avoiding [sic] collateral damage areas" as a reason for "unsuccessful" missions, but it does not give numbers of civilian casualties or examples of bad intelligence leading to a mistaken kill.



Since the first drone strike in Yemen in 2002, hundreds of people have been killed in U.S. operations in Yemen and Somalia, many of them innocent civilians. The tallies shown here were compiled by the [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-kill-chain/) from reports of both CIA and JSOC drone strikes and other operations. The large range in the estimates is due to the inherent difficulties of collecting data on airstrikes in war zones. The identities of the “people killed” were often unknown and may include civilians as well as suspected terrorists or militants. The U.S. almost never publicly acknowledges individual operations. Graphic: The Intercept

Yet the overall conclusion is that getting accurate positive identification is a “critical” issue for the drone program in the region, due to limitations in technology and the number of spy aircraft available. The military relies heavily on signals intelligence – drawn from electronic communications – and much of it comes from foreign governments, who may have their own agendas.

Identifying the correct target relates directly to the issue of civilian casualties: If you don't have certainty about your target, it follows that you may well be killing innocent people. In Iraq and Afghanistan, “when collateral damage did occur, 70 percent of the time it was attributable to failed – that is, mistaken – identification,” according to a paper by Gregory McNeal, an expert on drones and security at Pepperdine School of Law.

Another factor is timing: If the 60-day authorization expired, analysts would have to start all over in building the intelligence case against the target, said a former senior special operations officer, who asked not to be identified because he was discussing classified materials. That could lead to pressure to take a shot while the window was open.



During the time of the study, there were multiple well-reported, high-profile incidents in which reported JSOC strikes killed the wrong people. Perhaps most famously, in October 2011, a 16-year-old U.S. citizen named Abdulrahman Awlaki, the son of Anwar al Awlaki, died in a JSOC strike while eating dinner with his cousins, two weeks after his father was killed by a CIA drone. In press accounts, one anonymous official called Abdulrahman's death “an outrageous mistake,” while others said he was with people believed to be members of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Publicly, the government has said only that he “was not specifically targeted.”

A September 2012 strike in Yemen, extensively investigated by Human Rights Watch and the Open Society Foundations, killed 12 civilians, in-

cluding three children and a pregnant woman. No alleged militants died in the strike, and the Yemeni government paid restitution for it, but the United States never offered an explanation.

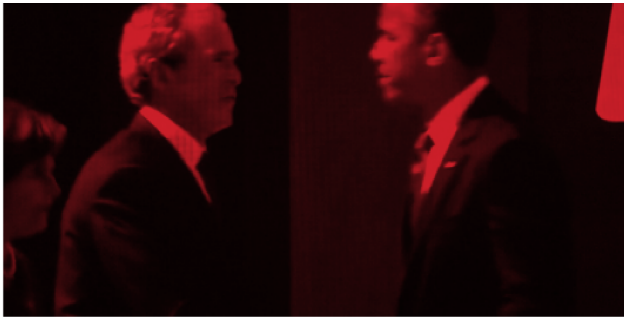
“The mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters of the people who were killed in these drones strikes want to know why,” said Amrit Singh, senior legal officer at the Open Society Justice Initiative. “We’re left with no explanation as to why they were targeted and in most cases no compensation, and the families are aware of no investigation.”

This spring, in a rare admission of a mistake in targeting, the White House **announced** that two hostages held by al Qaeda — an American and an Italian — had been killed in a CIA drone strike in Pakistan in January. In attempting to explain the tragedy, the White House spokesperson used the language of the standards that had failed to prevent it: The hostages had died despite “near certainty,” after “near continuous surveillance,” that they were not present.

Additional reporting:  **Jeremy Scahill**
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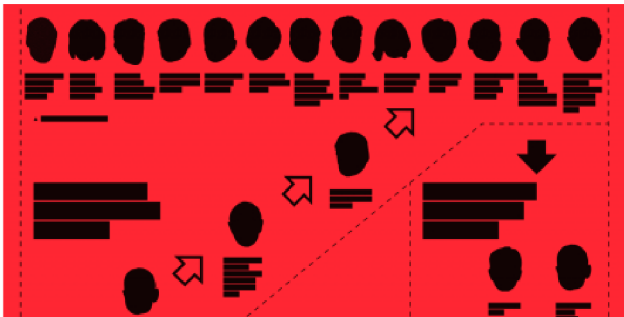


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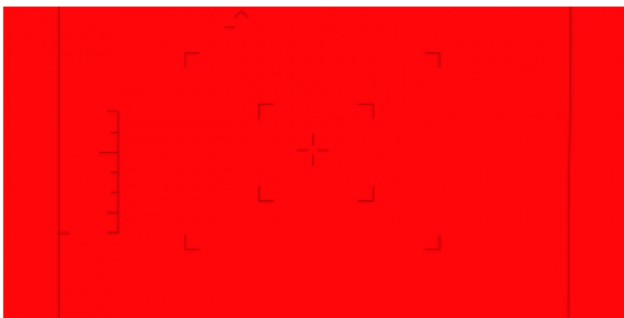


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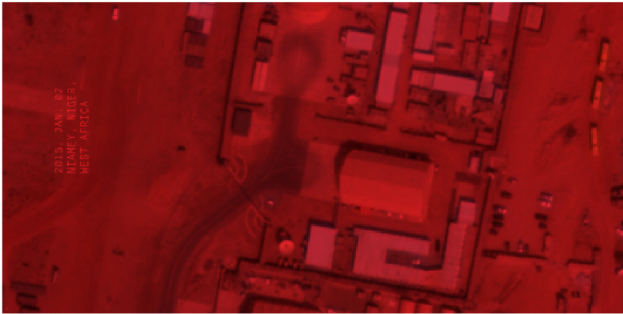


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THE ALPHABET OF ASSASSINATION

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GEOLOCATION WATCHLIST

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The Intercept_

04.

ARTICLE Nº4 OF 8

THE DRONE PAPERS

[Jeremy Scahill](#)

October 15 2015, 5:00 a.m.

Soon after he was elected president, Barack Obama was strongly urged by Michael Hayden, the outgoing CIA director, and his new top counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan, to adopt the way of the scalpel — small footprint

counterterrorism operations and drone strikes. In one briefing, Hayden bluntly told Obama that covert action was the only way to confront al Qaeda and other terrorist groups plotting attacks against the U.S.



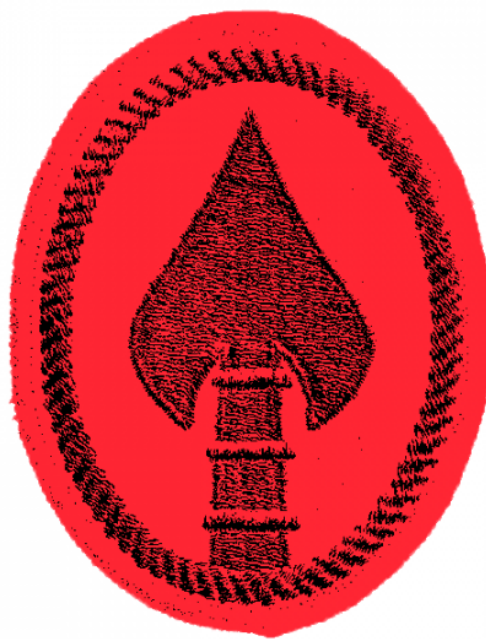
Getty Images

THE VIEW AMONG Obama's inner circle was that Iraq and Afghanistan had served as useful laboratories for such tactics, but deploying them outside conventional war zones meant different legal and diplomatic considerations would apply. An all-star team of special operations commanders, war planners, and Pentagon officials pressed the new president to dramatically ramp up the shadow wars in Yemen and Somalia to fight the emerging threats in those countries. They called for sweeping away bureaucratic obstacles and streamlining lethal operations.

In short, a new global architecture of assassination was called for, and that meant navigating an increasingly tense turf war between the CIA and the Pentagon over these activities.

The CIA had long dominated the covert war in Pakistan, and in 2009 Obama **expanded** the agency's drone resources there and in Afghanistan to regularly pound al Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban, and other targets. The military, tasked with prosecuting the broader war in Afghanistan, was largely sidelined in the Pakistan theater, save for the **occasional** cross-border raid and the Air Force personnel who **operated** the CIA's drones. But the Pentagon was not content to play a peripheral role in the global drone war, and aggressively positioned itself to lead the developing drone campaigns in Yemen and Somalia.

In September 2009, then-Cent-com Commander Gen. David Petraeus **issued** a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force Execute Order that would lay the groundwork for military forces to conduct expanded clandestine actions in Yemen and other countries. It allowed for U.S. special operations forces to enter friendly and unfriendly countries "to build networks that could 'penetrate, disrupt, defeat or destroy' al Qaeda and other militant groups, as well as to 'prepare the environment' for future attacks by American or local military forces."



Altered insignia of the U.S. Special Operations Command. Illustration: The Intercept

At the same time, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and al Shabaab both began to escalate their rhetoric – and, in AQAP's case, to plot terror attacks on U.S. soil. After the failed Christmas Day "underwear"

bomb plot over Detroit, the Obama administration **responded** by green-lighting special operations commanders' plans for direct action.

In December 2009, the Obama administration signed off on its **first** covert airstrike in Yemen – a cruise missile attack that killed **more than 40 people**, most of them women and children. After that strike, as with the CIA's program in Pakistan, drones would fuel the Joint Special Operations Command's high-value targeting campaign in the region.

When Obama took office, there had been only **one** U.S. drone strike in Yemen – in November 2002. By 2012, there was a drone strike **reported** in Yemen every six days. As of August 2015, more than 490 people had been **killed** in drone strikes in Yemen alone.

“The drone campaign right now really is only about killing. When you hear the phrase ‘capture/kill,’ capture is actually a misnomer. In the drone strategy that we have, ‘capture’ is a lower case ‘c.’ We don’t capture people anymore,” Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told *The Intercept*. “Our entire Middle East policy seems to be based on firing drones. That’s what this administration decided to do in its counterterrorism campaign. They’re enamored by the ability of special operations and the CIA to find a guy in the middle of the desert in some shitty little village and drop a bomb on his head and kill him.”



DRONE STRIKES UNDER OBAMA IN YEMEN/SOMALIA

Illustration: The Intercept

THE TIP OF THE SPEAR in the Obama administration's escalated wars in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula was a special operations task force known as **TF 48-4**, according to **secret documents** provided to *The Intercept*. In response to a series of detailed questions, a Defense Department spokesperson said, "We don't comment on the details of classified reports."

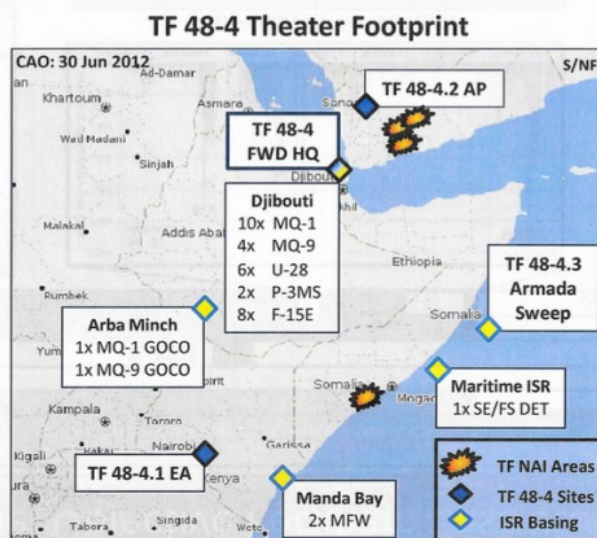
The task force's primary command center was at the former French Army outpost at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, a small African nation nestled between Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and the Gulf of Aden. With its strategic location, Lemonnier served as the hub for launching actions from military facilities scattered across the region. The task force also utilized a maritime drone platform and a surveillance apparatus positioned in the Arabian Sea, used for intercepting data. TF 48-4 had sites in Nairobi and Sanaa and a drone base in Arba Minch, Ethiopia. A small base in Manda Bay, Kenya — a stone's throw from Somalia — housed special operations commandos and manned aircraft.

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TF 48-4 Focus and Organization

- ▶ (S/NF) TF 48-4 is organized into two main branches: East Africa (EA) in Nairobi, Kenya and Arabian Peninsula (AP) in Sana'a, Yemen
 - TF 48-4 EA and AP are further subdivided geographically into teams
 - TF 48-4 forward support element is at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti
- ▶ (S/NF) ISR is based at three regional airfields, supplemented with sea-based Scan Eagles or MQ-8 Fire Scouts
 - Djibouti (Camp Lemonnier)*
 - Arba Minch
 - Manda Bay
- ▶ (S/NF) TF 48-4 counterterrorism operations are focused on violent extremist organizations (VEOs)
 - Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula
 - Al Qaida in East Africa/Al Shaabab
- ▶ (S/NF) TF 48-4 CT operations are only part of a broader whole-of-government approach to regional security / stability



* Subsequent to data collection and interviews for this study, flight operations are being shifted from Camp Lemonnier

3

A slide from a classified Pentagon study outlines the air and naval assets of the secret task force charged with hunting down, killing, and capturing high-value individuals in Somalia and Yemen.

The task force's operations, aimed at hunting down and killing or capturing members of AQAP and al Shabaab, were largely conducted with drones and fixed-wing aircraft. On occasion, small teams of special operators mounted **ground operations** inside Somalia and Yemen, or **interdicted** ships, snatching suspected terrorists. But drones were the administration's preferred weapon.

"It is the politically advantageous thing to do – low cost, no U.S. casualties, gives the appearance of toughness," **said** Adm. Dennis Blair, Obama's former director of national intelligence, explaining how the administration viewed its policy at the time. "It plays well domestically,

and it is unpopular only in other countries. Any damage it does to the national interest only shows up over the long term.”

As Yemen’s status began to rise to the top of U.S. counterterrorism priorities, the long-simmering turf war between the Pentagon and the CIA flared up. In 2011, the CIA began using a newly constructed drone base in Saudi Arabia, giving it easier access to targets in Yemen than the military’s bases in East Africa. There were parallel, and competing, target lists and infighting over who should run the drone war in Yemen. At times, this drama played out on the pages of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* — with leaks coming from both sides in an effort to influence policy. The CIA’s backers in Congress argued that the agency showed more “**patience and discretion**” in its drone strikes, while some prominent military advocates portrayed the agency as ill-equipped to conduct military-style operations and less accountable to Congress.

At the peak of this bureaucratic civil war, in 2012, an **influential** and well-funded Defense Department entity, the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Task Force, began preparing a classified brief on challenges faced by special operations forces conducting counterterrorism operations in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, such as those operating under TF 48-4. The ISR Task Force fell under the control of Michael Vickers, a powerful veteran of CIA paramilitary operations. Obama had promoted Vickers in 2010 to undersecretary of defense for intelligence, and as the Pentagon’s top intelli-



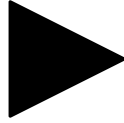
Michael Vickers, former undersecretary of defense for intelligence, was a powerful figure in the world of covert operations. Photo: Haraz N. Ghanbari/AP

gence official he exerted great influence over matters of covert operations.

The task force had been **established** in 2008 to study the intelligence and surveillance needs of war fighters in Afghanistan and Iraq. By 2012, it had evolved into a multibillion-dollar advocacy wing pushing for the purchase of new surveillance technologies to support the military's black ops forces in waging unconventional wars.

The purpose of the ISR study, in outlining the challenges faced by special operations units tasked with disrupting and destroying terrorist networks, was to press for more tools and to collect data that would guide future operations.

The Intercept obtained two versions of the study, both titled “ISR Support to Small Footprint CT Operations – Somalia/Yemen.” **One slide deck**, a detailed report, was distributed in February 2013, and another, an **executive summary**, was circulated in May 2013, the month President Obama gave the first major address of his presidency on drones and targeted killings. The timing of the reports is interesting, because it was during this period that the Obama administration began to publicly advance the idea of handing control of the drone program to the military.



On May 23, 2013, President Obama gave his first formal address on drone strikes at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

“The United States has taken lethal, targeted action against al Qaeda and its associated forces, including with remotely piloted aircraft commonly referred to as drones,” Obama **said** in front of a military audience. “As was true in previous armed conflicts, this new technology raises profound questions – about who is targeted, and why; about civilian casualties, and the risk of creating new enemies; about the legality of such strikes under U.S. and international law; about accountability and morality.” Drone strikes, he asserted, are “effective” and legal.

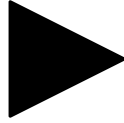
Obama did not mention TF 48-4 in his speech, but it was the actions of the special operations task force – and those of the CIA’s parallel program – that he was discussing.

During the period covered in the ISR study – January 2011 through June 2012 – three U.S. citizens were killed in drone strikes in Yemen. Only one, the radical preacher Anwar al Awlaki, was labeled the intended tar-

get of the strike. The U.S. claimed it did not intend to kill Samir Khan, who was traveling with Awlaki when a Hellfire hit their vehicle. The third – and most controversial – killing of a U.S. citizen was that of Awlaki's son, 16-year-old Abdulrahman Awlaki. He was killed two weeks after his father, while having dinner with his cousin and some friends. Immediately after the strike, anonymous U.S. officials asserted that the younger Awlaki was connected to al Qaeda and was 21 years old. After the family produced his birth certificate, the U.S. changed its position, with an anonymous official calling the killing of the teenager an “**outrageous mistake.**”

A former senior official in the Obama administration, who worked on the high-value targeting program and asked not to be identified because he was discussing classified material, **told me** in 2013 that after the Abdulrahman strike, the president was “surprised and upset and wanted an explanation.” “We had no idea the kid was there,” the official said. The White House did not officially acknowledge the strikes until nearly two years later. “We killed three U.S. citizens in a very short period,” he told me. “Two of them weren’t even targets: Samir Khan and Abdulrahman Awlaki. That doesn’t look good. It’s embarrassing.”

The former senior official said that John Brennan, President Obama’s top counterterrorism adviser, “suspected that the kid had been killed intentionally and ordered a review. I don’t know what happened with the review.” When asked about the review, a spokesperson for the National Security Council told me, “We cannot discuss the sensitive details of specific operations.”



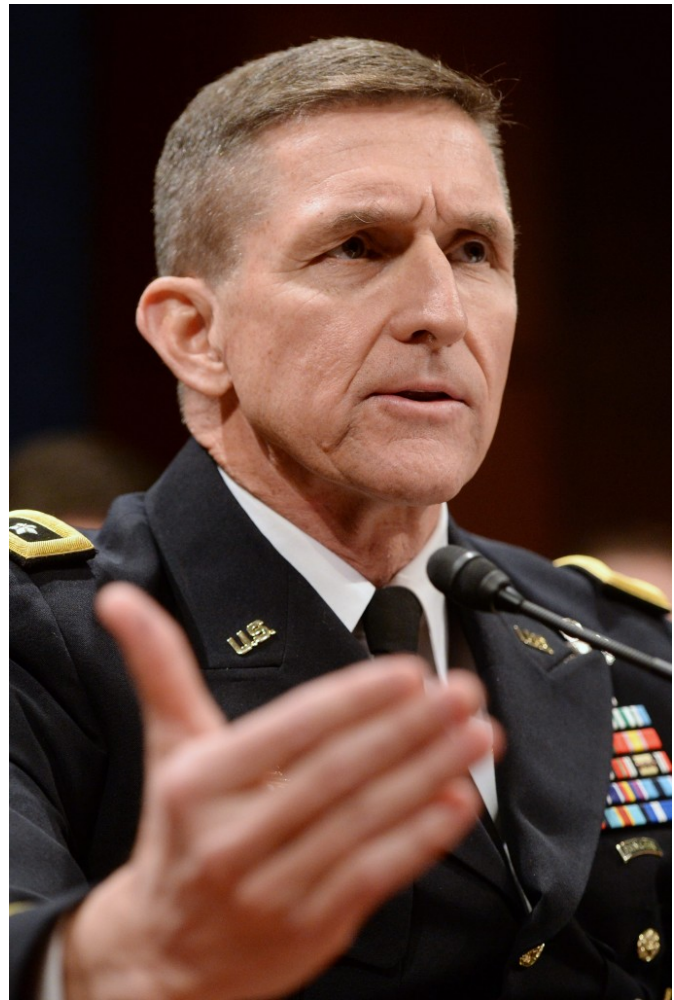
Home video of Abdulrahman Awlaki playing with his younger siblings in the family's courtyard in 2009. The 16-year-old U.S. citizen was killed in a drone strike on October 14, 2011, in Yemen.

Lt. Gen. Flynn, who since leaving the DIA has become an outspoken critic of the Obama administration, charges that the White House relies heavily on drone strikes for reasons of expediency, rather than effectiveness. “We’ve tended to say, drop another bomb via a drone and put out a headline that ‘we killed Abu Bag of Doughnuts’ and it makes us all feel good for 24 hours,” Flynn said. “And you know what? It doesn’t matter. It just made them a martyr, it just created a new reason to fight us even harder.”

Glenn Carle, a former senior CIA officer, disputes Flynn’s characterization of the Obama administration’s motive in its widespread use of drones. “I would be skeptical the government would ever make that formal decision to act that way,” Carle, who spent more than two decades in the CIA’s clandestine services, told *The Intercept*. “Obama is always attacked by the right as being soft on defense and not able to make the

tough decisions. That's all garbage. The Obama administration has been quite ruthless in its pursuit of terrorists. If there are people who we, in our best efforts, assess to be trying to kill us, we can make their life as short as possible. And we do it."

TF 48-4, according to the documents, did in fact have an impressive cache of firepower in Djibouti to kill or capture people approved for the kill list by the president. According to **one slide**, as of 2012 the base at Camp Lemonnier housed more than a dozen armed drones and additional surveillance aircraft. Its arsenal also included eight manned F-15E warplanes, which can carry so-called bunker busters — 5,000-pound laser-guided bombs.



Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, was an architect of JSOC's find, fix, finish doctrine. Photo: Michael Reynolds/EPA/Landov

The ISR Task Force recommended providing special operations forces with more and better drones and an enhanced mandate to capture and interrogate suspects "via host-nation partners."

Outsourcing U.S. kill/capture operations to local forces, which occurred frequently throughout the Bush administration's time in office, regularly led to human rights abuses, torture, and extrajudicial killings. "I'm very hesitant on backing foreign militaries or paramilitary forces or militias," said Clinton Watts, a former FBI special agent who worked on counterterrorism and later served as an executive officer of the Combat-

ing Terrorism Center at West Point. “I’ve seen that up close before and you’re backing rape and pillage campaigns through the countryside, usually. You can’t control them and you don’t have transparency over what they do and it blows up in your face the same way that a bad drone strike does.”

The ISR Task Force asserted that an increase in the number of capture operations **could be achieved** by using U.S. “advisors” to build partnerships with local forces and by conducting “advance force operations.” AFOs are used by the U.S. military to discreetly plant tracking devices, conduct surveillance, and physically access places inhabited by potential targets, often in “denied areas” where the U.S. is not yet at war. Forces deployed in AFOs **may also conduct** clandestine “direct actions,” including kill/capture operations.

During the Bush administration, AFOs served as a primary vehicle for justifying the **clandestine deployment** of U.S. special operators **across the world** to engage in “**operational preparation**” of a future battlespace. Those activities expanded as the Bush administration adopted the **view** that, post 9/11, “the entire world is the ‘battlespace.’”

A July 2015 U.S. government **contract solicitation** for training Pacific Command personnel who conduct AFOs envisioned a course that would focus on tactics “that directly or indirectly support technical surveillance operations in non-permissive environments.” Among them: breaking and bypassing a slew of locks, both physical and digital; cloning hotel room key cards; picking advanced car lock systems; and learning “physical restraint escape techniques.” The solicitation stated that operatives need such courses to “remain proficient in this highly refined skill set.”

PHASE 1:

U.S. military descriptions of the “skill set” required for advance force operations.

THE TONE OF THE ISR STUDY at times gives the impression that special operations forces were effectively prisoners of resource shortages and a legal bureaucracy that interfered with the military’s ability to kill or capture terrorists with the frequency, efficiency, and urgency demanded by policymakers.

Those sentiments were echoed by Lt. Gen. Flynn, who served for years as the chief intelligence officer for JSOC. “You cannot conduct counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, or counter-guerrilla operations without having effective interrogation operations,” Flynn said in an interview. “If the president says, ‘Defeat this enemy,’ but you say you need resources that you never get, you just can’t defeat the enemy. Without the ability to capture or interrogate, your effectiveness when conducting counterterrorism operations can be cut in half, if not even lower than that, and that’s the challenge that we face.”

Carle, the former senior CIA officer, said the ISR study is part of the “classic” turf war. “If you get the budget,” he said, “then you control the decisions and everybody thinks that whatever toys they control are the

toys that need to be used and therefore you need more of them.” The Pentagon wants “to expand their influence,” he added, “because then you don’t have obstreperous and disheveled civilian CIA guys who clink glasses in salons telling you how to do things. They don’t want that. That’s a classic turf institutional tension.”

The study, which utilizes corporate language to describe lethal operations as though they were a product in need of refining and upgrading, includes analyses from IBM, which **has boasted** that its work for the Pentagon “integrates commercial consulting methods with tacit knowledge of the mission, delivering work products and advice that improve operations and creates [sic] new capabilities.”

The study **compared** the tempo and methods of conventional operations in which U.S. personnel were on the ground in large numbers – as in Iraq and Afghanistan – to the shadow wars in Yemen and Somalia, where there was a scant and sporadic U.S. military presence. Unlike in Iraq and Afghanistan, where special operations units were given carte blanche to engage in a systematic kill/capture program, in Somalia and Yemen they were required to operate under more stringent rules and guidelines. “When compared to previous operations,” the study **asserted**, “the amount of time required to action objectives is literally orders of magnitude higher.”

The CIA has operated in Pakistan with **looser requirements** for obtaining the president’s direct approval before launching strikes; the president also waived the requirement that a CIA target present an “imminent” threat.

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Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) Operations

▶ (S/NF) Step 1 - "Developing a target" to "Authorization of a target"

- TF 48-4 direct action operations are conducted under execution orders for Operation Copper Dune (AP/Yemen) and Operation Jupiter Garret (EA/Somalia)
- These orders specify delegated authorities, authorized targets and criteria for action
- TF intelligence personnel, with support from IC partners, builds the case for action
- This information, in a condensed format known as a "baseball card (BBC)", is packaged with the operations information into a "CONOPS" package and staffed up to higher echelons—ultimately to the President
- If proven that the target presents a threat to U.S. interest or personnel, then a 60-day authorization to action is given

▶ (S/NF) Step 2 - "Authorizing" to "Actioning"

- If POTUS approves the CONOP, operations enter a targeting cycle
- Actionable intelligence provides potential targeting windows
- The targeting window suitability is determined by ROE:
 - must be Low CDE, "near certainty" of HVI presence based on two forms of intelligence, no contradictory intelligence
 - TF, GCC, CoM, CoS, HN Gov all must concur or no strike occurs

Current Authorization to Action List

Operation	Count
Jupiter Garret (Somalia)	4
Copper Dune (Yemen)	16

CAO: 30 Jun 2012

Source: Multiple interviews conducted with JSOC and TF 48-4 personnel

6

A slide from a May 2013 Pentagon presentation shows the chain of command for ordering drone strikes and other operations carried out by JSOC in Yemen and Somalia. GCC = Geographic Combatant Command; SECDEF = Secretary of Defense; PDC/PC = Principals' Deputies Committee/Principals Committee; CoM = Chief of Mission; CoS = Chief of Station

One slide **outlined the bureaucracy** involved in authorizing the military to conduct high-value strikes, a process that in some cases took years. "Relatively few high-level terrorists meet criteria for targeting under the provisions," the **study** said, and the "near certainty" standard for positively identifying a target and requirements of "low" collateral damage "reduces targeting opportunities." The study lamented the technical difficulties in achieving **positive identification** of a targeted person and guaranteeing minimal collateral damage, particularly when **insufficient** numbers of drones and full motion video platforms caused "blinking" in the surveillance apparatus.

One former senior special operations officer, who asked not to be identified because he was discussing classified materials, told *The Intercept* that the ISR study was best understood as a “bitch brief.” The message, he said, was, “We can’t do what you’re asking us to do because you are not giving us the resources to get it done.”

As the Obama era draws to a close, the internal debate over control of the drone program continues, with some **reports** suggesting the establishment of a “dual command” structure for the CIA and the military. For now, it seems that the military is getting much of what it agitated for in the ISR study. In August, the *Wall Street Journal* **reported** that the military plans to “sharply expand the number of U.S. drone flights over the next four years, giving military commanders access to more intelligence and greater firepower to keep up with a sprouting number of global hot spots.” The paper reported that drone flights would increase by 50 percent by 2019, adding: “While expanding surveillance, the Pentagon plan also grows the capacity for lethal airstrikes.”

Top photo: Veronique de Viguerie/Getty Images



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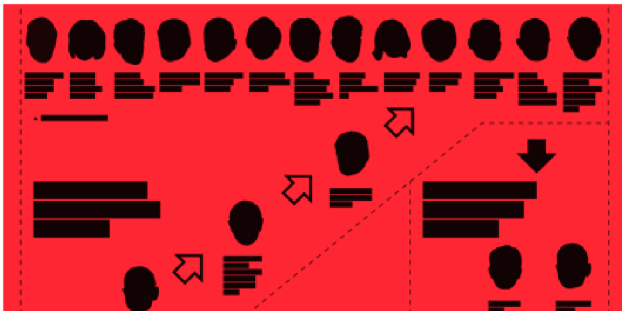


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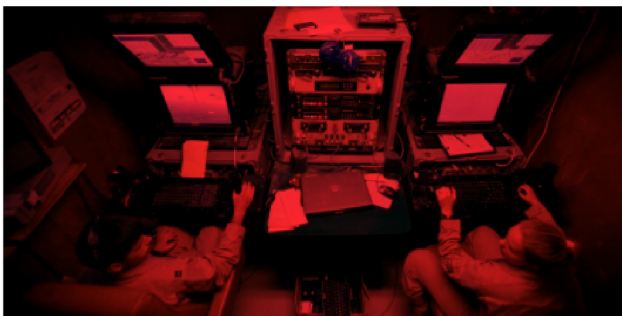


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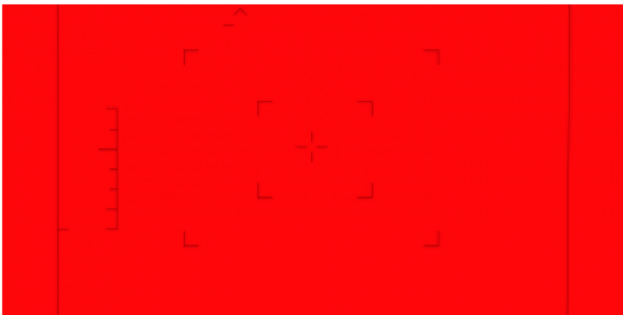


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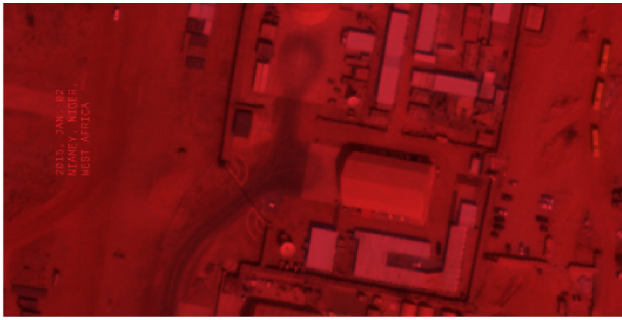


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Ryan Gallagher

For years Bilal el-Berjawi traveled freely from the U.K. to Somalia under the watchful eyes of intelligence services. Then the U.S. killed him with a drone strike.

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To reduce the “tyranny of distance,” drones fly from bases in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Navy ships.

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Intercept_

05.



ARTICLE Nº5 OF 8

THE DRONE PAPERS



Ryan Devereaux

October 15 2015, 4:57 a.m.

From 2011 to 2013, the most elite forces in the U.S. military, supported by the CIA and other elements of the intelligence community, set out to destroy the Taliban and al Qaeda forces

that remained hidden among the soaring peaks and plunging valleys of the Hindu Kush, along Afghanistan's northeastern border with Pakistan. Dubbed Operation Haymaker, the campaign has been described as a potential model for the future of American warfare: special operations units, partnered with embedded intelligence elements running a network of informants, pinpointing members of violent organizations, then drawing up plans to eliminate those targets from the battlefield, either by capturing or killing them.



Getty Images/Science Faction

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS obtained by *The Intercept*, detailing the purpose and achievements of the Haymaker campaign, indicate that the American forces involved in the operations had, at least on paper, all of the components they needed to succeed. After more than a decade of war in Afghanistan, a robust network of intelligence sources – including informants on the ground – had been established in parts of the historically rebellious, geographically imposing provinces of Ku-

nar and Nuristan. The operators leading the campaign included some of the most highly trained military units at the Obama administration's disposal, and they were supported by the world's most powerful electronic surveillance agencies, equipped with technology that allowed for unmatched tracking of wanted individuals.

Despite all these advantages, the military's own analysis demonstrates that the Haymaker campaign was in many respects a failure. The vast majority of those killed in airstrikes were not the direct targets. Nor did the campaign succeed in significantly degrading al Qaeda's operations in the region. When contacted by *The Intercept* with a series of questions regarding the Haymaker missions, the United States Special Operations Command in Afghanistan declined to comment on the grounds that the campaign – though now finished – remains classified.

The secret documents obtained by *The Intercept* include detailed slides pertaining to Haymaker and other operations in the restive border regions of Afghanistan, including images, names, and affiliations of alleged militants killed or captured as a result of the missions; examples of the intelligence submitted to trigger lethal operations; and a “story board” of a completed drone strike. The targets identified in the slides as killed or detained represent a range of militant groups, including alleged members of the Taliban and al Qaeda – but also local forces with no international terrorism ambitions, groups that took up arms against the U.S after American airstrikes brought the war to their doorsteps.

An additional slide included in the materials charts mission statistics from September 2011 to September 2012 for Task Force 3-10, which was responsible for special operations across Afghanistan, breaking down in rare detail the more than 2,000 missions conducted by elite U.S. forces in the country over the course of a year.

Together, the materials offer an unprecedented glimpse into the kind of killing that has come to define the war on terror, underscoring the in-

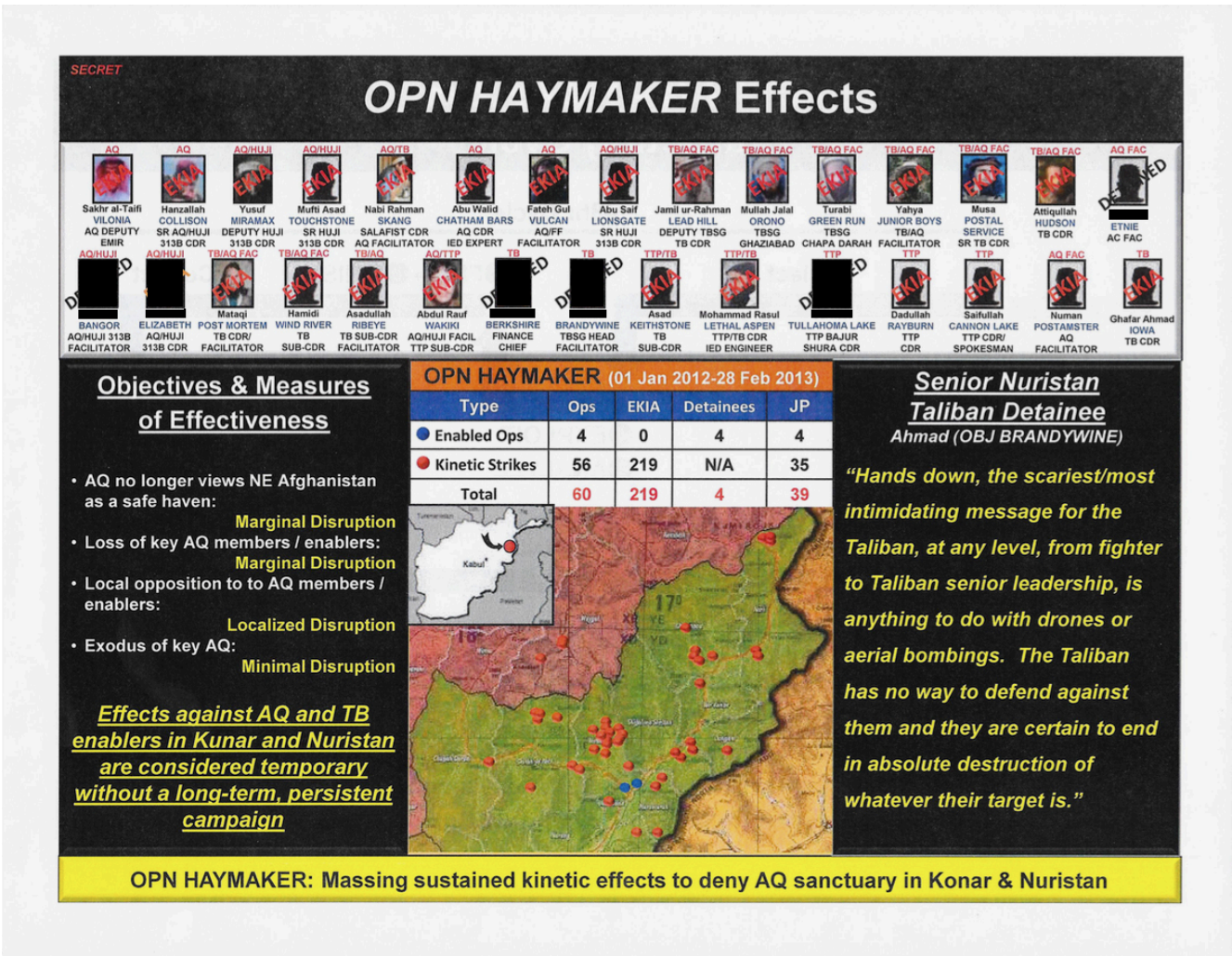
herent limitations, and human cost, of those operations. With the Obama administration publicly committed to continuing campaigns like Haymaker – special operations missions focused on hunting down specific individuals, not only in Afghanistan but in nations around the world – the documents raise profound questions over the legacy of the longest foreign war in American history and its influence on conflicts to come.



A village security force commander and coalition special operations forces identify insurgent fighting positions during a daylong firefight in Nuristan province, Afghanistan, April 12, 2012. Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

THE FREQUENCY WITH which “targeted killing” operations hit unnamed bystanders is among the more striking takeaways from the Haymaker slides. The documents show that during a five-month stretch of the campaign, nearly nine out of 10 people who died in airstrikes were not the Americans’ direct targets. By February 2013, Haymaker airstrikes had resulted in no more than 35 “jackpots,” a term used to signal the

neutralization of a specific targeted individual, while more than 200 people were declared EKIA – “enemy killed in action.”



there is no question,” he said. “They label them EKIA.” In the case of airstrikes in a campaign like Haymaker, the source added, missiles could be fired from a variety of aircraft. “But nine times out of 10 it’s a drone strike.”

The source is deeply suspicious of those airstrikes – the ones ostensibly based on hard evidence and intended to kill specific individuals – which end up taking numerous lives. Certainty about the death of a direct target often requires more than simply waiting for the smoke to clear. Confirming a chosen target was indeed killed can include days of monitoring signals intelligence and communication with sources on the ground, none of which is perfect 100 percent of the time. Firing a missile at a target in a group of people, the source said, requires “an even greater leap of faith” – a leap that he believes often treats physical proximity as evidence.

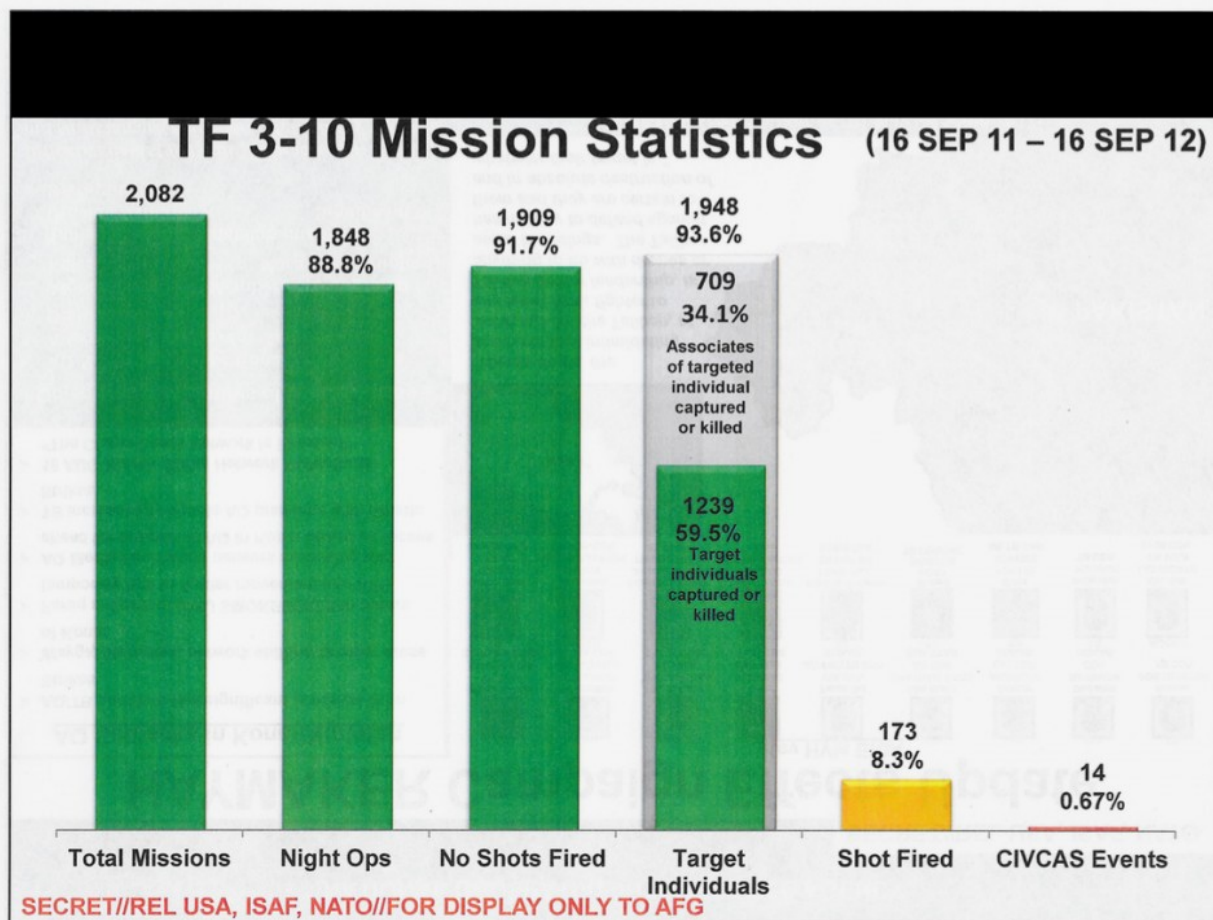
The documents include slides focused specifically on Haymaker operations from January 2012 to February 2013, distinguishing between raids, described as “enabled” and “combined” operations, and airstrikes, which are described as “kinetic strikes.” In both cases, raids and airstrikes, the source said the target was always an individual person. “Every mission that’s triggered begins as an objective to find one person for whatever reason,” the source said, adding, “Every jackpot is one person off the list.”

According to the documents, raids performed on the ground during Haymaker were far less lethal than airstrikes and led to the capture of scores of individuals. Research by Larry Lewis, formerly a principal research scientist at the Center for Naval Analyses, supports that conclusion. Lewis spent years studying U.S. operations in Afghanistan, including raids, airstrikes, and jackpots, all with an eye to understanding why civilian casualties happen and how to better prevent them. His contract work for the U.S. military, much of it classified, included a focus on

civilian casualties and informed tactical directives issued by the top generals guiding the war. During his years of research, what Lewis uncovered in his examination of U.S. airstrikes, particularly those delivered by machines thought to be the most precise in the Pentagon's arsenal, was dramatic. He **found** that drone strikes in Afghanistan were 10 times more likely to kill civilians than conventional aircraft.

“We assume that they're surgical but they're not,” Lewis said in an interview. “Certainly in Afghanistan, in the time frame I looked at, the rate of civilian casualties was significantly higher for unmanned vehicles than it was for manned aircraft airstrikes. And that was a lot higher than raids.”

The limited point of view of the drone's camera, what Lewis describes as the “soda straw effect,” together with the globally dispersed operational network that supports drone strikes, can lead to mistakes, he argues, including the loss of innocent lives. The materials obtained by *The Intercept* make just one explicit mention of civilian casualties, in the Task Force 3-10 mission statistics from September 2011 through September 2012. The **document** reveals the U.S. conducted more than 1,800 “night ops” at a time when President Hamid Karzai was calling for an end to American involvement in controversial night raids. Of those operations – which resulted in 1,239 targets captured or killed and 709 “associates” of targets captured or killed – the military reported “shots fired” in less than 9 percent of its missions, with a total of 14 civilian casualty “events” for the year.



A breakdown of 2011 to 2012 mission statistics for Task Force 3-10, a U.S. special operations task force responsible for missions in Afghanistan at the time.

“The 14 civilian casualties is highly suspect,” said the source, who reviewed after-action reports on raids and other operations in Afghanistan. “I know the actual number is much higher,” he added. “But they make the numbers themselves so they can get away with writing off most of the kills as legitimate.”

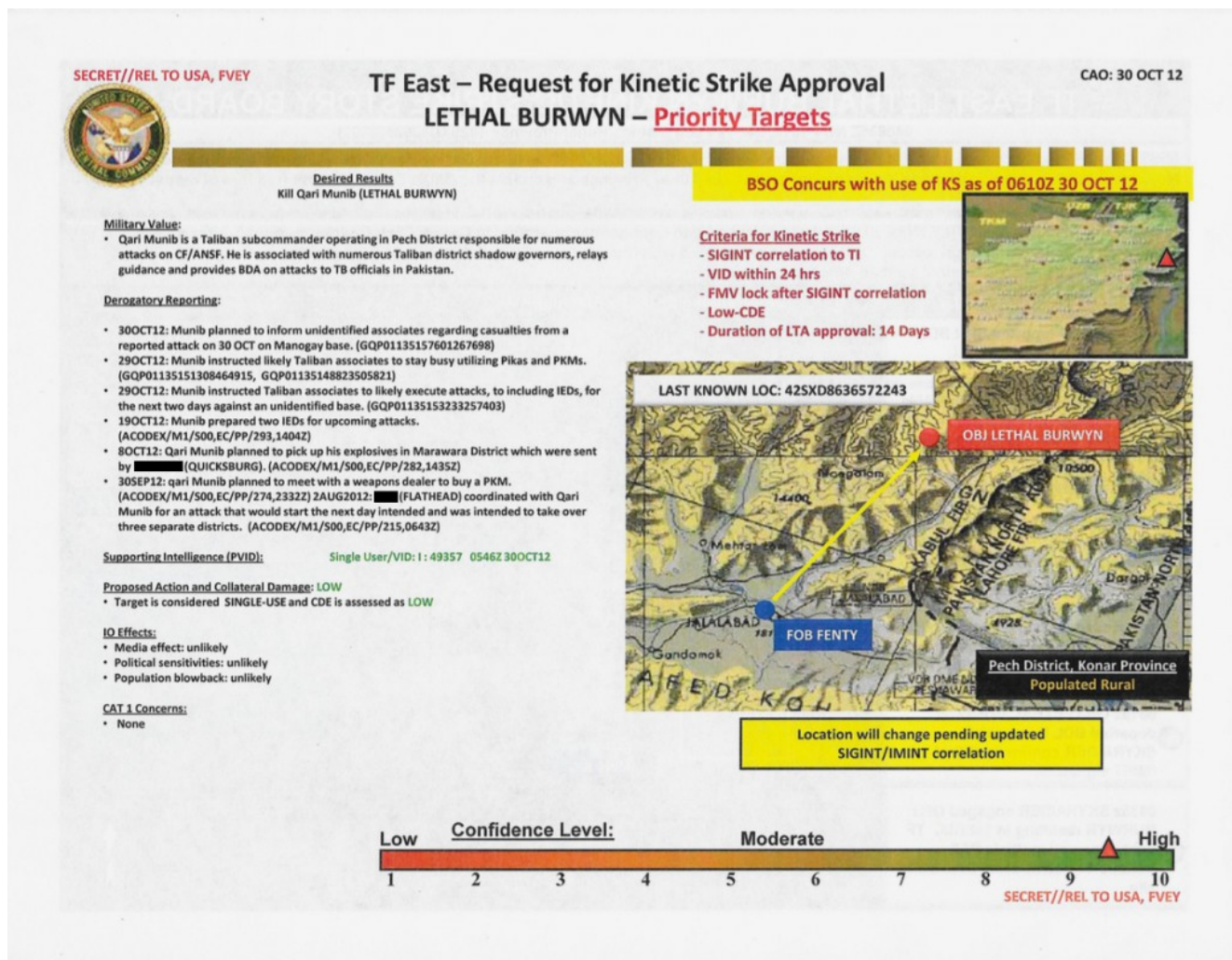
The Haymaker documents reveal little about whether the deaths reflected in the materials were “legitimate” or not. They do, however, offer an illustrative window into how the killing has been done in the past – and how it may be done in the future.



U.S. special operations personnel prepare to board a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during a mission in Kunar province, Afghanistan, Feb. 25, 2012. Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

THE REQUEST WAS UNAMBIGUOUS. Dated October 30, 2012, and stamped with the seal of the United States Central Command, the title read, “Request for Kinetic Strike Approval.” The “desired results” listed at the top of the **document** included just three words: “Kill Qari Munib.”

Munib, whose objective name was “Lethal Burwyn,” was described as a Taliban subcommander operating in the Pech district of Kunar province. He allegedly exercised command and control over a specific portion of the organization, was responsible for numerous attacks on both coalition and Afghan security forces, and communicated with Taliban officials in Pakistan. Specifically, the request reported, Munib had been implicated in recent plots to carry out improvised explosives attacks.



A 2012 U.S. military request for an airstrike targeting Qari Munib, an alleged Taliban subcommander operating in northeastern Afghanistan.

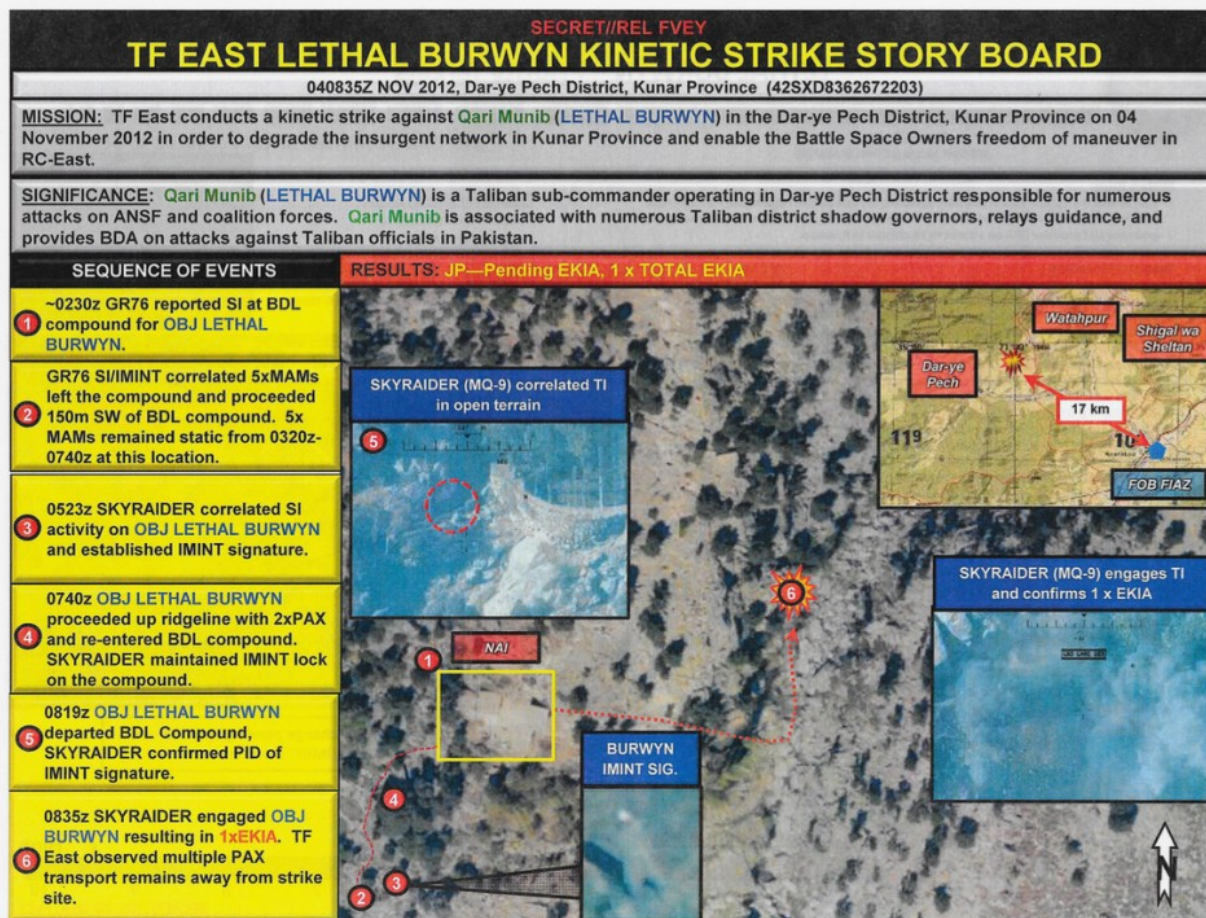
The Americans considered the consequences of taking Munib's life, including media coverage, possible political fallout, and potential "population blowback." In all three categories, it was determined that negative repercussions were "unlikely," and that Munib's death would "decrease attacks on" coalition and Afghan forces. Going through with the operation, the request asserted, would require a signals intelligence "correlation," followed by a full motion video lock, visual identification within 24 hours of the strike, and a "low" probability of collateral damage. Two maps were featured in the document intended to seal Munib's fate, one of which included coordinates of his last known location. In the bottom right hand corner of the document was a bar, numbered one to 10, and

fading in color from red to green. It was titled “Confidence Level.” A red triangle sat between the numbers nine and 10.

Less than a week after the briefing was completed, the kill mission was underway. Signals intelligence had been picked up from a compound where Munib was known to sleep, according to a storyboard detailing the operation. Images relayed from the scene revealed the presence of five military-age males in the area. Floating above the site, an MQ-9 Reaper drone, known as “Skyraider,” captured the image of a man dressed in a drab, flowing robe, with a white cap on his head, casting a long shadow in the dirt. According to the storyboard, the image was “correlated” to signals intelligence linked to Munib.

Skyraider loitered above as the man, joined by two others, walked up a ridgeline before heading back into the compound. The figure again emerged from the building. The drone’s camera registered a positive identification. Skyraider “engaged.” A screen grab from the scene shows a cloud of smoke where the individual had been. Task force personnel watched as a group of people collected the target’s remains.

“RESULTS: JP – Pending EKIA, 1 x TOTAL EKIA,” the storyboard reported. An enemy had been killed in action. Confirmation that he was indeed Munib, the jackpot, or JP, was still pending.



A storyboard detailing a 2012 U.S. drone strike targeting Qari Munib, an alleged Taliban sub-commander.

On Friday, November 9, 2012, NATO issued one of its standard updates on missions around the country, including two short lines about an operation carried out the day before in eastern Afghanistan. “An Afghan and coalition security force killed Taliban leader Qari Munib during a security operation in Kunar province Thursday,” the **statement read**. “Qari Munib was responsible for directing attacks against Afghan and coalition forces and coordinating the movement of weapons and ammunition for the attacks.”

The announcement appeared five days after the drone strike described in the intelligence community storyboard, which made no mention of Afghan forces involved in the operation. Was Munib killed in a unilater-

al U.S. drone strike, later obfuscated by NATO? Or did the drone strike fail to jackpot, resulting in a subsequent joint operation that succeeded in eliminating him? If so, who was it that Skyraider engaged that day? Whose body parts did the American analysts watch the first responders collect?

Those questions remain unanswered. A more fundamental question suggests itself, however. How did the most powerful military in history come to devote its elite forces and advanced technology to the hunt for a man like Qari Munib – a mid-level Taliban figure in a remote corner of the planet, half a world away from the White House and ground zero in Manhattan, more than 11 years after the September 11 attacks?

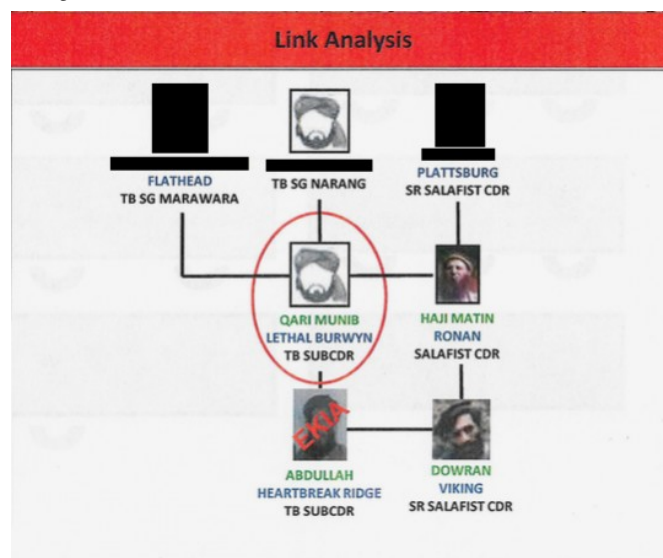
WHEN THE AMERICANS set out to kill Qari Munib with a drone in 2012, an **intelligence document** purporting to lay out his bona fides as a target listed local insurgency figures alongside regional actors. In a graphic titled “Link Analysis,” Munib’s name appears under a generic cartoon of an Afghan male, surrounded by six other headshots. Half of them are described as “Salafists,” a conservative faction that has existed in Kunar for decades and, for a period, resisted Taliban presence in the province.

One of the Salafists pictured was Haji Matin, a timber trader from the Korengal Valley. In the early years of the war, one of Matin’s business rivals wrongly fingered him as a militant to the Americans. U.S. forces responded by bombing Matin’s home. While Matin survived, several members of his family **were killed**. The Americans then appropriated one of his lumberyards as an outpost, thus turning one of the most powerful men in the area into a formidable insurgent leader. The transformation of men like Matin and the Salafists, once locally minded power-brokers, into anti-U.S. fighters, was hardly unique.

“When viewed from absolutely the wrong metric, the Americans were very successful at hunting people,” said Matt Trevithick, a researcher who in 2014 made more than a dozen **unembedded trips** to some of Kunar’s most remote areas in an effort to understand the province, and American actions there, through the eyes of its residents. The problem, he said, is that savvy, opportunistic

strongmen maneuvered to draw U.S. forces into local conflicts, a dynamic that played out again and again throughout the war. “We knew nothing about who we were shooting at – specifically in Kunar,” Trevithick said. He understands the frustration of conventional U.S. forces who were dropped in places like Kunar. “I don’t blame them,” he said. “They’re put in an impossible situation themselves. But what happens is everyone starts looking like the enemy. And that means you start shooting. And that means people actually do become the enemy.”

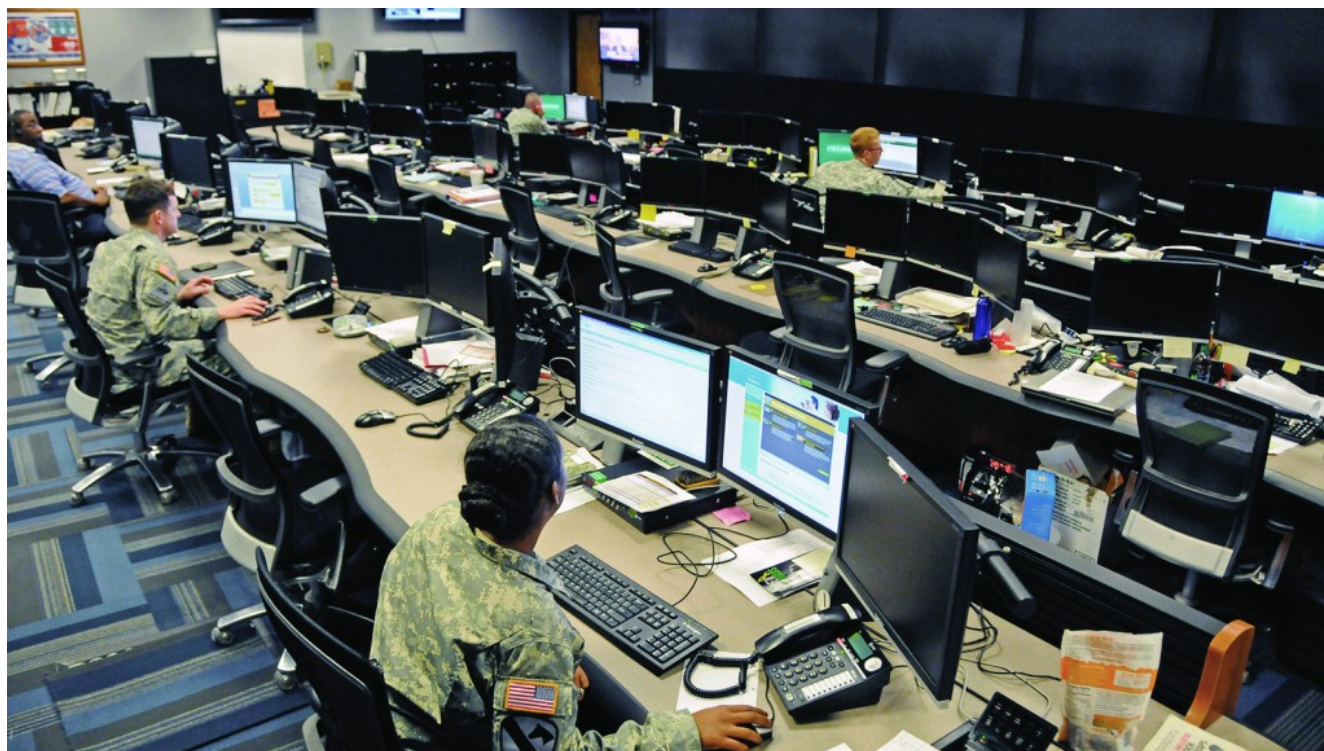
In September 2010, nine years after the terrorist attacks in New York City, the U.S. military and coalition forces were working their way through a list of 744 people slated for death or capture in Afghanistan. According to the so-called Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL), provided by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, Kunar, with 44 targets, had the third-highest total in the country. Few of the Kunar targets represented core al Qaeda-linked figures, and many were associated with local groups like the Salafists, whose listed offenses typically included attacks on Western and Afghan government forces in the province. The targets on the 2010 list were prioritized with rankings of one to four, in terms of their significance, with one being the most significant. In Kunar, a sin-



A “Link Analysis” purporting to detail alleged Taliban subcommander Qari Munib’s ties to other militant figures.

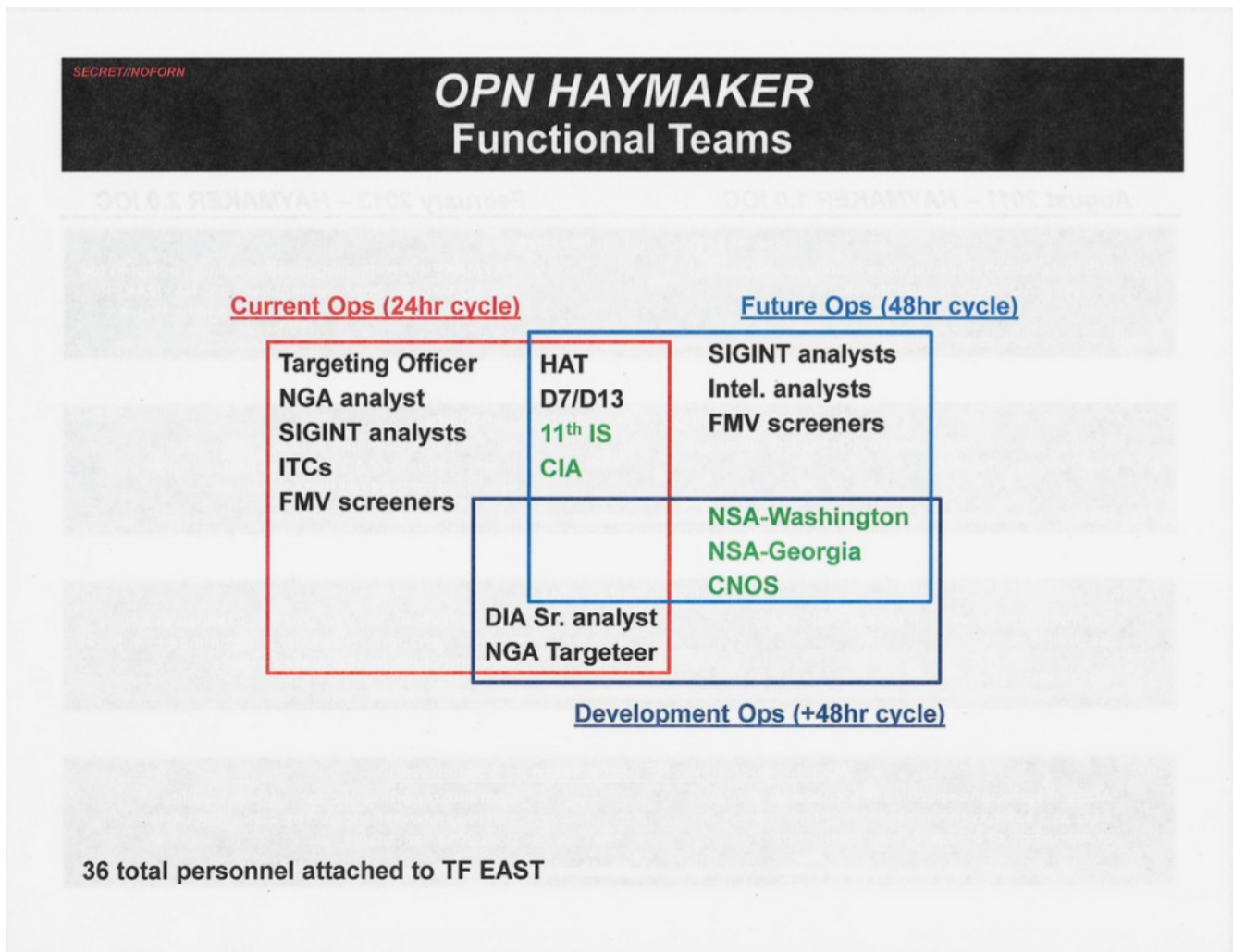
gle target rose to the level of priority one, while more than 80 percent were designated priority three. Seven of the JPEL targets appear in the Haymaker slides, though just three had been linked to al Qaeda. Regardless of their associations, the U.S. ultimately devoted the same resources to picking off locally affiliated militants as it did to the campaign against the group responsible for 9/11.

After nearly a decade of war, thousands of operations, and thousands of deaths, some within the special operations community began to question the quality of the United States' targets in Afghanistan. "By 2010, guys were going after street thugs," a former SEAL Team 6 officer **told** the *New York Times* recently. "The most highly trained force in the world, chasing after street thugs." Concerns that the U.S. was devoting tremendous resources to kill off a never-ending stream of nobodies did little to halt the momentum.



Cyber and military intelligence specialists monitor Army networks in the Cyber Mission Unit's Cyber Operations Center at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Photo: U.S. Army Cyber Command

THE SECRET DOCUMENTS obtained by *The Intercept*, which include a **slide** on “Manhunting Basics,” reflect the combination of U.S. military personnel and spies who have hunted targets along Afghanistan’s border with Pakistan for years. According to **one of the slides**, the Haymaker “functional teams” included the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the NSA, and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. The Air Force’s uniquely designed 11th Intelligence Squadron also played a role. The Florida-based squadron was **reactivated** in August 2006 for the express purpose of supporting “find, fix, finish” operations to capture or kill targets through analysis of aerial intelligence.



A slide detailing Operation Haymaker’s “functional teams,” which included personnel from a range of U.S. military units and intelligence agencies.

The drone operations that supported campaigns like Haymaker also included personnel stationed at Camp Alpha, a secure facility at Bagram populated by teams from the military's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), as well as contractors manning stations at U.S. bases like Fort Gordon, a lesser-known though crucial node in the war on terror that supports tactical NSA operations abroad from Augusta, Georgia. The hunting and killing operations relied on advanced technology to zero in on targets, including the cellphone geolocation system known as GILGAMESH. As *The Intercept* **reported** in 2014, the GILGAMESH system employs a simulated cellphone tower to identify and locate targeted SIM cards.

SECRET//NOFORN

Manhunting Basics

- **HUMINT** These aren't the terrorist you're looking for
- **IMINT** FMV is your friend ... and enemy
- **SIGINT** May I ask who's calling, please?
- **ABI** More layers are preferred
- **SNA** More connections aren't always best
- **IPB** Yep, IPB
- **F3EA** Can we stop adding letters?
- **Kinetic v. Direction Action**

A slide on "Manhunting Basics" takes a lighthearted approach to the core mission of the Haymaker campaign: finding and killing specific individuals. ABI = Activity Based Intelligence; F3EA = Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze; HUMINT = Human Intelligence; IMINT = Imagery Intelligence; IPB = Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace; SIGINT = Signals Intelligence; SNA = Social Network Analysis

While signals intelligence and electronic surveillance clearly contributed to Haymaker's kinetic operations – like the drone strike that targeted Qari Munib – there was evidently more to the missions than advanced technology. Unlike some other arenas in which the war on terror has touched down – Yemen or Somalia, for example – the documents point to the robust presence of U.S. intelligence agencies and human sources on the ground in northeastern Afghanistan. In Nuristan's Waygal district, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the CIA had “myriad complementary sources,” a **slide** laying out “targeting criteria” in the district noted, “some of whom may be able to trigger our operations.” A third of the “active targets” in Waygal had “good selectors” – phones the Americans could target in the run-up to a raid or airstrike – and the NSA had “taken on [signals intelligence] development in Waygal, greatly enhancing our understanding of the [signals intelligence] environment.”

OP WAYGAL – Operational Targeting Criteria

Waygal District:

- *Maturity of HUMINT network* – **HIGH**.
 - HI networks have developed over the past 12-18 months. HAT and OGA have myriad complementary sources, some of whom may be able to trigger our operations.
- *Quality of established NAIs* – **HIGH**.
 - We currently have high fidelity on 8x NAIs in Waygal. This speaks to the level of historic HI, SI, FMV development in the valley.
- *Depth of SIGINT start points* – **MED**.
 - A third of our active targets have good selectors. NSA-W has taken on SI development in Waygal, greatly enhancing our understanding of the SI environment.
- *Number of active targets* – **HIGH**.
 - Over a dozen active targets across 3 villages, most of whom are JTL'd or could easily be. Known AQ Arabs are on this deck.
- *H-value** – **HIGH**.
 - Waygal is an historic AQ sanctuary. The targets there are not only senior-level Taliban facilitators and hosts, but Arabs themselves.
 - Faruq al-Qahtani and Dost Mohammad and their entourages frequent Waygal.
 - Elimination of these targets will provide demonstrable measures of success.

****HAYMAKER Value (H-Value)** is the assessed return on investment of achieving success in a named operation**

A slide reporting a robust presence of human intelligence sources (HUMINT or HI) in the district of Waygal, a “historic” al Qaeda sanctuary in northeastern Afghanistan.

According to the slide, Waygal, described as a “historic” al Qaeda sanctuary, included more than a half-dozen NAIs, “named areas of interest,” the identification of which was attributed to similarly “historic” levels of human and signals intelligence cultivation, as well as surveillance provided by drones scanning the district. There were “over a dozen active targets” in three villages, the slide said, adding that most of the targets were already on a targeting list, or “easily could be.” “The targets there are not only senior-level Taliban facilitators and hosts, but Arabs themselves,” the slide noted, underscoring the presence of suspected foreign fighters in the district. “Elimination of these targets,” it continued, “will provide demonstrable measures of success.”

The documents indicate that U.S. forces launched just one airstrike as part of the Haymaker campaign in the early months of 2012, killing two people. In May 2012, however, the tempo of operations picked up dramatically, an increase that coincided with a strategic shift in Afghanistan emanating from the White House. As the military’s focus shifted to hunting down specific targets from 2011 to 2012, drone strikes in Afghanistan **increased** by 72 percent.

Over the course of five months, stretching through the summer of 2012, Haymaker operations included 27 raids and 27 airstrikes. The raids resulted in the capture of 61 people, 13 of them jackpots, the actual targets of the missions. A total of two people were reportedly killed in these ground operations. In the airstrikes, meanwhile, a total of 155 people were killed and labeled as enemies killed in action, according to **a table** presented in the documents. Just 19 were jackpots. The table does not say whether the jackpots are reflected in the EKIA total. It does, however, appear to present a success rate: the number of jackpots divid-

ed by the number of missions. In the case of raids, a figure of 48 percent is presented; for airstrikes it's 70 percent.

HAYMAKER Operations (01 May – 15 Sep 2012)					
Type	# Ops	EKIA	Detainees	JP	%
Enabled Ops	27	2	61	13	48%
Kinetic Strikes	27	155	N/A	19	70%
Total	54	157	61	32	

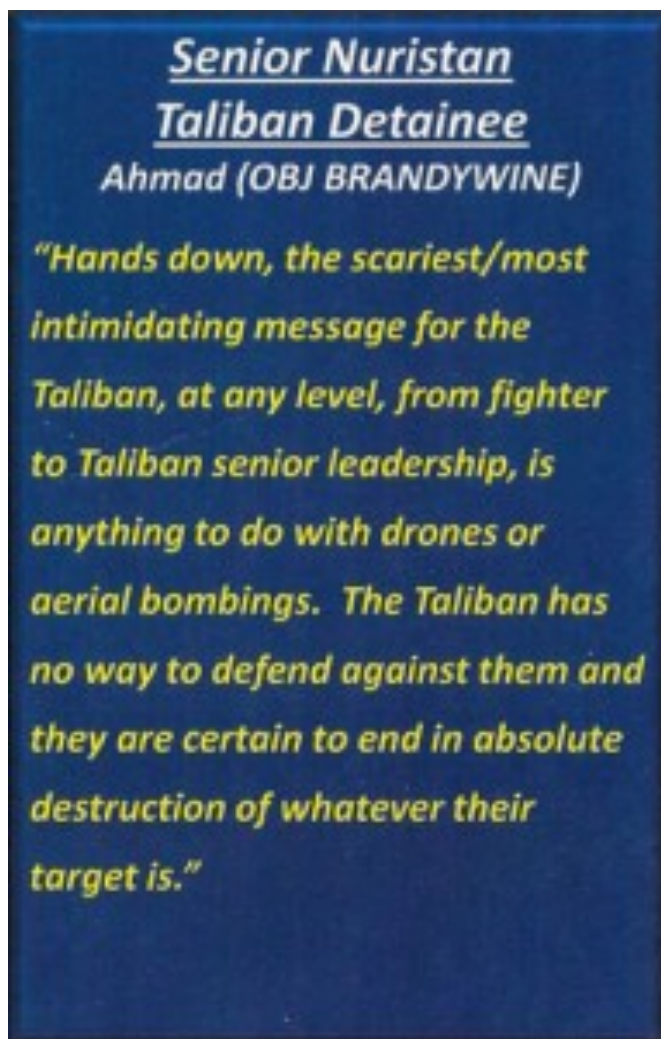
A comparison of raids (described as “enabled ops”) and airstrikes (described as “kinetic strikes”) reveals significant differences in the total number of prisoners taken versus individuals killed during an intensified period of Haymaker operations. EKIA = Enemy Killed in Action; JP = Jackpot.

The scores of unnamed people killed in the hunt for jackpots, and the intelligence opportunities lost by failing to capture targets alive, do not appear to factor into the calculation. The apparent success rate, in other words, depends solely on killing jackpots, and ignores the strategic – and human – consequences of killing large numbers of bystanders.

While the source conceded there could be scenarios in which women and children killed in an airstrike are labeled as EKIA, in the case of the Haymaker strikes he believed it was “more likely” that the dead included “groups of men or teenaged boys” killed because “the intel says the guy JSOC is going after may be in that group of men.” In the event that a target is identified in such a group, he said, “They’ll go through with the strike.”

The materials also include a chart revealing that airstrikes killed 219 people over a 14-month period in 2012 and 2013, resulting in at least 35 jackpots. The **document** includes thumbnail images of individuals, representing a range of groups, who were captured or killed during Haymaker – in total 30 men, 24 of them stamped EKIA, five detained, and one wounded in action. The deaths of just over half the individuals were noted in NATO’s press releases or media reports.

THE HAYMAKER FILES also point to the psychological impact of living under the constant threat of death from above – an effect human rights workers have **documented** among civilians living in areas populated by militants. A quote attributed to a Taliban detainee identified as “Ahmad,” aka “Objective Brandywine,” features prominently on three of the **documents**. “Hands down, the scariest/most intimidating message for the Taliban, at any level, from fighter to Taliban senior leadership, is anything to do with drones or aerial bombings,” Ahmad purportedly said. “The Taliban has no way to defend against them and they are certain to end in absolute destruction of whatever their target is.”



A quote attributed to an alleged Taliban detainee describes the psychological impact of living under the threat of U.S. airstrikes.

Still, the documents’ assessment of Haymaker’s effectiveness was frank. A slide detailing the campaign’s “effects” from January 2012 through February 2013 included an assessment of “Objectives & Measures of Effectiveness.” The results were not good. Disruptions in al Qaeda’s view of northeastern Afghanistan as a safe haven and the loss of “key” al Qaeda members and enablers in the region were deemed “marginal.” Meanwhile, **a comparison** of Haymaker 1.0 (August 2011) with Haymaker 2.0 (February 2013) noted that al Qaeda faced “little to no local opposition” and enjoyed “relatively free movement” to and from Pakistan. Kinetic strikes, the slide

reported, “successfully killed one [al Qaeda] target per year,” allowing the organization to “easily” reconstitute.

OPN HAYMAKER Success Criteria – Before and After	
August 2011 – HAYMAKER 1.0 IOC	February 2013 – HAYMAKER 2.0 IOC
Loss of key AQ members / enablers	
– K/S successfully killed approximately one AQ target per year; AQ easily reconstitutes.	– HAYMAKER efforts succeeded in killing/capturing few key AQ targets. Improvement over pre-HAYMAKER efforts, but pace of successes needs to be faster.
Local opposition to AQ members / enablers	
– Little to no local opposition to AQ; AQ entrenched in key Taliban networks.	– Nascent developments in some valleys indicate locals are tiring of AQ efforts to root out spies as a perceived method to stopping strikes.
Exodus of key AQ	
– Relatively free movement to/from PAK at AQ's discretion.	– Few individuals have returned to Pakistan due to routine operational necessity and continue to support AQ efforts both in AFG and externally.
AQ no longer views NE Afghanistan as a safe haven	
– AQSL discussions specifically focused on utility of AFG as a safe haven – movement of families, construction of AQ-specific infrastructure.	– Sporadic reporting of concern over viability of safe haven overshadowed by AQSL discussions of post-2014 sanctuary.

A slide reveals the Haymaker campaign's limited strategic achievements.

By 2013, Haymaker was amassing a significant body count but making little headway against al Qaeda forces in the region. According to the “Success Criteria” slide, “sporadic reporting of concern over [the] viability” of northeastern Afghanistan as a safe haven had been “overshadowed” by the group's senior leadership discussing the estab-

lishment of a “post-2014 sanctuary.” Individuals continued to return to Pakistan to support operations in and outside of Afghanistan, the slide asserted. While “nascent developments in some valleys” indicated that locals were “tiring” of al Qaeda's efforts to “root out spies as a perceived method to stopping strikes,” the strikes and raids themselves had “succeeded in killing/capturing few [al Qaeda] targets.” As slides detailing its effectiveness noted, Haymaker's impact on al Qaeda and Taliban enablers in Kunar and Nuristan was “considered temporary without a long-term, persistent campaign.”



A wounded Afghan boy receives treatment at a hospital in Kunar province on Feb. 13, 2013, after a NATO airstrike killed 10 civilians. Photo: Namatullah Karyab/AFP/Getty Images

ON FEBRUARY 18, 2013, while Haymaker was still underway, Afghan President Hamid Karzai issued a **decree**: Afghan military forces were barred from calling in U.S. airstrikes for support on missions. The order followed an operation in Kunar in which NATO and Afghan forces were blamed for the deaths of 10 civilians – including one man, four women, and five children. In 2012, the U.N. mission in Afghanistan had documented a number of other incidents involving civilian deaths resulting from U.S. operations, including a raid that left seven civilians dead, an “aerial attack” that killed seven children and one adult, and a drone strike targeting “two insurgents” that killed a teenage girl.

The most recent date included in the Haymaker materials is February 28, 2013. Whether the date marked the end of the campaign is unclear. What does seem clear, however, is that Haymaker coincided with an increase in drone strikes and civilian casualties across Afghanistan. By the end of 2013, the U.N. reported the number of civilian casualties from drone strikes in Afghanistan had tripled from 2012, with “almost one-third of the civilian deaths from aerial operations” reported in Kunar, the heart of the Haymaker campaign. Records of condolence payments disbursed by the U.S. military, **obtained** by *The Intercept*, show more than \$118,000 distributed in 45 disbursements to Kunar in fiscal years 2011 through 2013. In addition to numerous injuries, the payments also cover the deaths of 27 people, including at least four children. The records do not indicate whether the incidents were linked to the Haymaker campaign or whether they were the result of mistaken ground raids or airstrikes.

DOCUMENTS OBTAINED BY THE INTERCEPT detailing Operation Haymaker, a U.S. military campaign carried out in the provinces of Kunar and Nuristan in northeastern Afghanistan, stretching from late 2011 into early 2013, identify dozens of individuals detained, wounded, or killed in American operations. This table contains the names, alleged militant affiliations, and ranks of 31 of those individuals, whose deaths were confirmed in the Haymaker materials, open source reports, or both. Though it is not comprehensive, the data set offers a unique glimpse at the range of targets elite U.S. forces have hunted along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in recent years, from al Qaeda's second in command in Afghanistan, Sakhr al-Taifi, to fighters such as the Salafist commander Haji Matin, whose militant objectives were more closely tied to the presence of U.S. forces in Kunar province.

NAME	OBJECTIVE	GROUP	RANK_MW	EKIA
JAMIL UR-RAHMAN	LEAD HILL	TB/AQ FAC	Commander	EKIA
SAKHR AL-TAIFI	VILONIA	AQ	Deputy emir	EKIA
NABI RAHMAN	SKANG	AQ/TB	Commander & Facilitator	EKIA
MUSA	POSTAL SERVICE	TB/AQ FAC	Commander & Facilitator	EKIA
HANZALLAH	COLLISON	AQ	Commander	EKIA
YUSUF	MIRAMAX	AQ/HUJI	Commander	EKIA
MUFTI ASAD	TOUCHSTONE	AQ/HUJI	Commander	EKIA
ABU WALID	CHATHAM BARS	AQ	Commander	EKIA
FATEH GUL	VULCAN	AQ	Facilitator	EKIA
TURABI	GREEN RUN	TB/AQ FAC	Facilitator	EKIA
ATTIQULLAH	HUDSON	TB/AQ FAC	Commander	EKIA
MATAQI	POST MORTEM	TB/AQ FAC	Facilitator	EKIA
DADULLAH	RAYBURN	TTP	Commander	EKIA
ABU SAIF	LIONSGATE	AQ/HUJI	Commander	EKIA
MULLAH JALAL	ORONO	TB/AQ FAC		EKIA
ASADULLAH	RIBEYE	TB/AQ	Sub-Commander & Facilitator	EKIA
ABDUL RAUF	WAKIKI	AQ/TTP	Sub-Commander & Facilitator	EKIA
ASAD	KEITHSTONE	TTP/TB	Sub-Commander	EKIA
NUMAN	POSTMASTER	TB/AQ FAC	Commander	EKIA
YAHYA	JUNIOR BOYS	TB/AQ FAC	Facilitator	EKIA
MOHAMMAD RASUL	LETHAL ASPEN	TTP/TB	Commander	EKIA
SAIFULLAH	CANNON LAKE	TTP	Commander	EKIA
GHAFAR AHMAD	IOWA	TB	Commander	EKIA
HAMIDI	WIND RIVER	TB/AQ FAC	Sub-Commander & Facilitator	EKIA
AMMAR	ANARCHY	LeT	Commander	EKIA
ABDULLAH	HEARTBREAK RIDGE	AQ	Commander	EKIA
DOST MOHAMMAD	DAKOTA	TB	Shadow	EKIA

			governor	
TURAB aka KHANJAR	KNIFE GAME	AQ/TB	Commander & Facilitator	EKIA
QARI MUNIB	LETHAL BURWYN	TB	Sub-Commander	EKIA
HAJI MATIN	RONAN	Salafist	Commander	EKIA
DOWRAN	VIKING	Salafist	Commander	EKIA

TB — Taliban

AQ — al Qaeda

AQ FAC — al Qaeda facilitator

HUJI — Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami

LeT — Lashkar-e-Taiba

TTP — Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan

EKIA — Enemy Killed In Action

Research: Margot Williams / theintercept.com

Until recently, the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan had largely receded from public conversations in the U.S. This month, an American airstrike on a hospital run by the international organization Médecins Sans Frontières, offered a forceful reminder that the war, despite the Obama administration's declaration in 2014, is far from over. Unleashed in the early morning hours of October 3, in the province of Kunduz, the U.S. attack killed at least a dozen members of the humanitarian group's medical staff and 10 patients, including three children. A nurse on the scene recalled seeing six victims in the intensive care unit ablaze in their beds. "There are no words for how terrible it was," the nurse **said**. MSF denounced the strike as a war crime and demanded an independent investigation.

The Kunduz attack **underscored** an ugly reality: After nearly a decade and a half of war, more than 2,300 American **lives lost**, and an estimated 26,000 Afghan **civilians killed**, the nature of combat in Afghanistan is entering a new, potentially bloodier, phase. In August, the United Nations **reported** that civilian casualties in Afghanistan "are projected to equal or exceed the record high numbers documented last year." While most civilian casualties in the first half of 2015 were attributed to "anti-government" forces, 27 deaths and 22 injuries were attributed to airstrikes "by international military forces," a 23 percent increase over

last year, most of them, unlike the air raid in Kunduz, carried out by drones.

Despite the rise in civilian casualties and the well-documented failure of drone strikes to achieve the military's broader objectives, there is every indication that unmanned airstrikes will play an increasing role in U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan, as they have in war zones across the world. Less than two weeks after the U.N. issued its report, *Foreign Policy* **revealed** that JSOC has drastically reduced the number of night raids it conducts in Afghanistan, while dramatically increasing its reliance on airstrikes, and is currently "on pace to double the rate at which it kills 'high-value individuals' using kinetic strikes, compared to how many it was killing that way five years ago."

Afghanistan's northeastern border with Pakistan remains an active area of focus for the remaining U.S. special operations forces in the country. The Pech Valley, once a hotspot during the Haymaker campaign, continues to host a constellation of armed groups. Al Qaeda, the organization used to justify both the invasion of Afghanistan and the Haymaker campaign, reportedly enjoys a more pronounced presence in the valley than ever. "The al Qaeda presence there now," according to a **report** by the United States Institute for Peace, "is larger than when U.S. counterterrorism forces arrived in 2002."

With JSOC and the CIA running a **new drone war** in Iraq and Syria, much of Haymaker's strategic legacy lives on. Such campaigns, with their tenuous strategic impacts and significant death tolls, should serve as a reminder of the dangers fallible lethal systems pose, the intelligence community source said. "This isn't to say that the drone program is a complete wash and it's never once succeeded in carrying out its stated purpose," he pointed out. "It certainly has." But even the operations military commanders would point to as successes, he argued, can have unseen impacts, particularly in the remote communities where U.S. mis-

siles so often rain down. “I would like to think that what we were doing was in some way trying to help Afghans,” the source explained, but the notion “that what we were part of was actually defending the homeland or in any way to the benefit of the American public” evaporated long ago. “There’s no illusion of that that exists in Afghanistan,” he said. “It hasn’t existed for many years.”

Top Photo: Ed Darack/Getty Images

Additional reporting:  [Jeremy Scahill](#) Research: [Margot Williams](#)
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[Jeremy Scahill](#)

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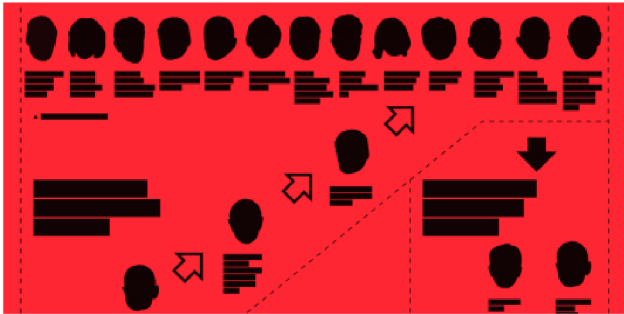


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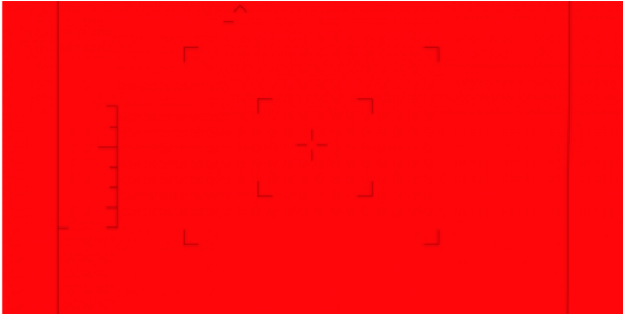
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**The
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06.

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THE DRONE PAPERS

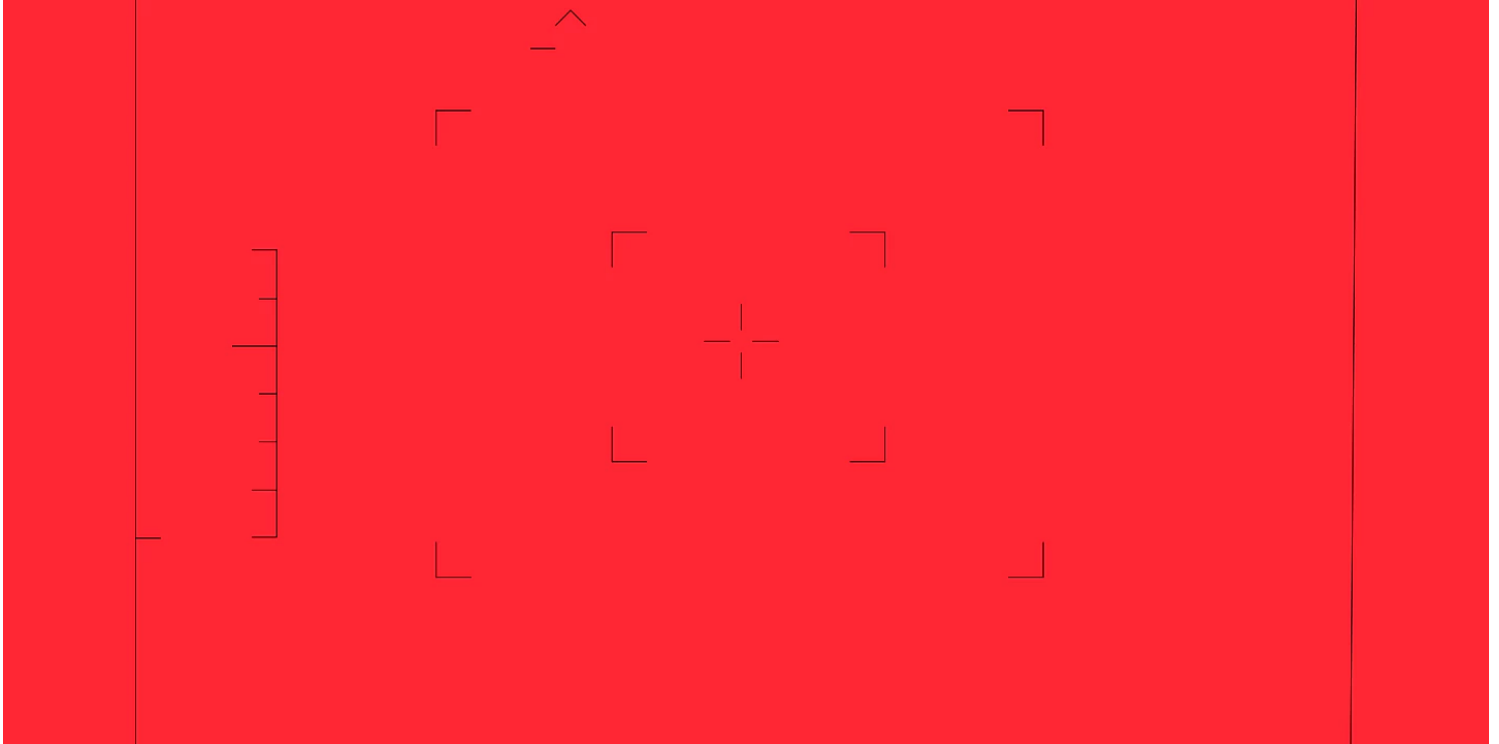


Cora Currier, Peter Maass

October 15 2015, 4:58 a.m.

The Obama administration has portrayed drones as an effective and efficient weapon in the ongoing war with al Qaeda and other radical groups. Yet classified Pentagon documents obtained by *The Intercept* reveal that the U.S. military has faced “critical shortfalls” in the technology and

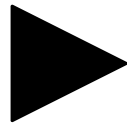
intelligence it uses to find and kill suspected terrorists in Yemen and Somalia.



THOSE SHORTFALLS STEM from the remote geography of Yemen and Somalia and the limited American presence there. As a result, the U.S. military has been overly reliant on signals intelligence from computers and cellphones, and the quality of those intercepts has been limited by constraints on surveillance flights in the region.

The documents are part of a **study** by a Pentagon Task Force on Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance. They provide details about how targets were tracked for lethal missions carried out by the Joint Special Operations Command, or JSOC, in Yemen and Somalia between January 2011 and summer 2012. When the study was circulated in 2013, the Obama administration was publicly **floating** the idea of moving the bulk of its drone program to the Pentagon from the CIA, and the mili-

tary was eager to make the case for more bases, more drones, higher video quality, and better eavesdropping equipment.



3D effects: Cerulean CGI, Photo: Brian Ritchie

Yet by identifying the challenges and limitations facing the military's "find, fix, finish" operations in Somalia and Yemen – the cycle of gathering intelligence, locating, and attacking a target – the conclusions of the ISR study would seem to undermine the Obama administration's claims of a precise and effective campaign, and lend support to critics who have questioned the quality of intelligence used in drone strikes.

The study made specific recommendations for improving operations in the Horn of Africa, but a Pentagon spokesperson, Cmdr. Linda Rojas, declined to explain what, if any, measures had been taken in response to the study's findings, saying only that "as a matter of policy we don't comment on the details of classified reports."

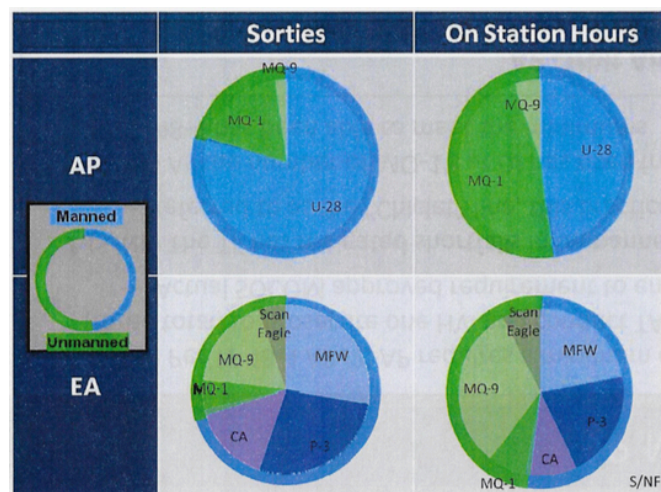
THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE

One of the most glaring problems identified in the ISR study was the U.S. military's inability to carry out full-time surveillance of its targets in the Horn of Africa and Yemen. Behind this problem lies the "tyranny of distance" — a reference to the great lengths that aircraft must fly to their targets from the main U.S. air base in Djibouti, the small East African nation that borders Somalia and sits just across the Gulf of Aden from Yemen.

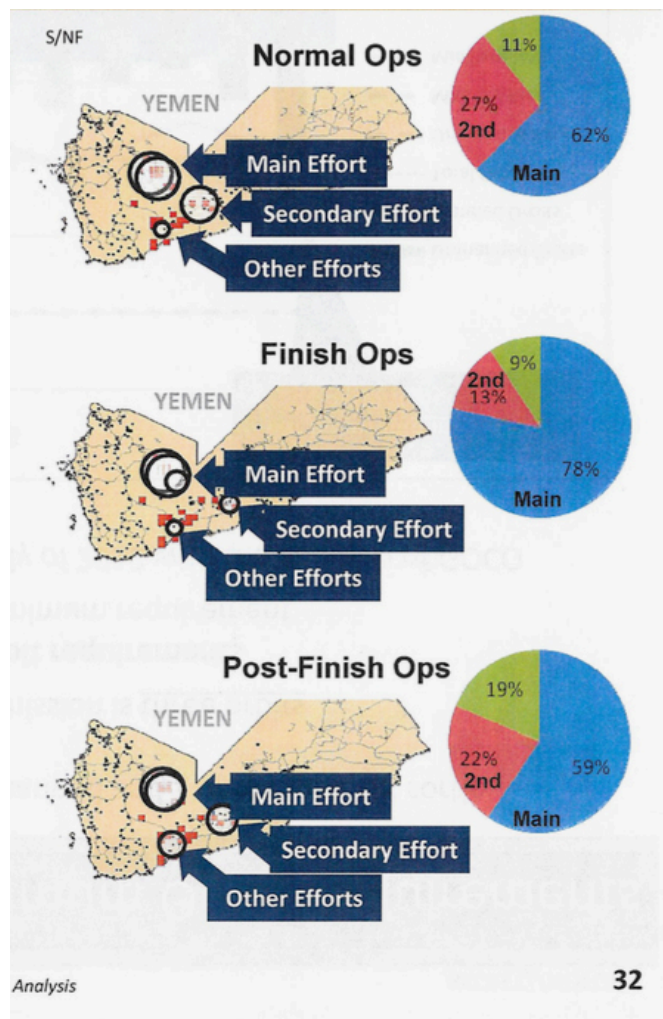
Surveillance flights are limited by fuel – and, in the case of manned aircraft, the endurance of pilots. In contrast with Iraq, where more than 80 percent of “finishing operations” were conducted within 150 kilometers of an air base, the study notes that “most objectives in Yemen are ~ 500 km away” from Djibouti and “Somalia can be over 1,000 km.” The result is that drones and planes can spend half their air time in transit, and not enough time conducting actual surveillance.

Compounding the tyranny of distance, the ISR **study complained**, was the fact that JSOC had too few drones in the region to meet the requirements mandated for carrying out a finishing operation. The military measures surveillance flights in orbits – meaning continuous, unbroken coverage of a target – and JSOC chronically failed to meet “minimum requirements” for orbits over Yemen, and in the case of Somalia had never met the minimum standards. On average, 15 flights a day, by multiple aircraft relieving or complementing one another, were needed to complete three orbits over Yemen.

The “sparse” available resources meant that aircraft had to “cover more potential leads – stretching coverage and leading to [surveillance] ‘blinks.’” Because multiple aircraft needed to be “**massed**” over one target before a strike, surveillance of other targets temporarily ceased, thus breaking the military’s ideal of a “persistent stare” or the “**unblinking eye**” of around-the-clock tracking.



A Pentagon chart showing that as of June 2012 manned spy planes accounted for the majority of flights over Yemen, even though drones were more efficient, since they could spend more time over a target. Over Somalia, the military used a mix of manned and unmanned aircraft. AP = Arabian Peninsula; EA = East Africa.



When the military was focused on a “finish” – meaning kill – operation, drones were taken off the surveillance of other targets.

JSOC **relied on manned spy planes** to fill the orbit gap over Yemen. In June 2012 there were six U-28 spy planes in operation in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, as well as several other types of manned aircraft. The U-28s in Djibouti were “referred to as the ‘Chiclet line,’” according to the ISR study, and “compounded Djiboutian air control issues” because of their frequent flights.

Only in the summer of 2012, with the addition of contractor-operated drones based in Ethiopia and Fire Scout unmanned helicopters, did Somalia have the minimum number of drones commanders wanted. The num-

ber of Predator drones stationed in Djibouti doubled over the course of the study, and in 2013, the fleet **was moved** from the main U.S. air base, Camp Lemonnier, to another Djibouti airstrip because of overcrowding and a string of crashes.

“Blinking” remained a concern, however, and the study recommended adding even more aircraft to the area of operations. Noting that political and developmental issues hampered the military’s ability to build new bases, it suggested expanding the use of aircraft launched from ships. JSOC **already made use** of Fire Scout helicopter drones and small Scan Eagle drones off the coast of Somalia, as well as “Armada Sweep,” which a 2011 document from the National Security Agency, provided by former

contractor Edward Snowden, describes as a “ship-based collection system” for electronic communications data. (The NSA declined to comment on Armada Sweep.)

Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, who was head of the Defense Intelligence Agency from July 2012 to August 2014, told *The Intercept* that the surveillance requirements he outlined for tracking al Qaeda while in office had never been met. “We end up spending money on other stupid things instead of actually the capabilities that we need,” he said. “This is not just about buying more drones, it’s a whole system that’s required.”

According to Micah Zenko, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations who has closely studied the drone war, resource constraints in Africa “mean less time for the persistent stare that counterterrorism analysts and commanders want, and got used to in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater.”

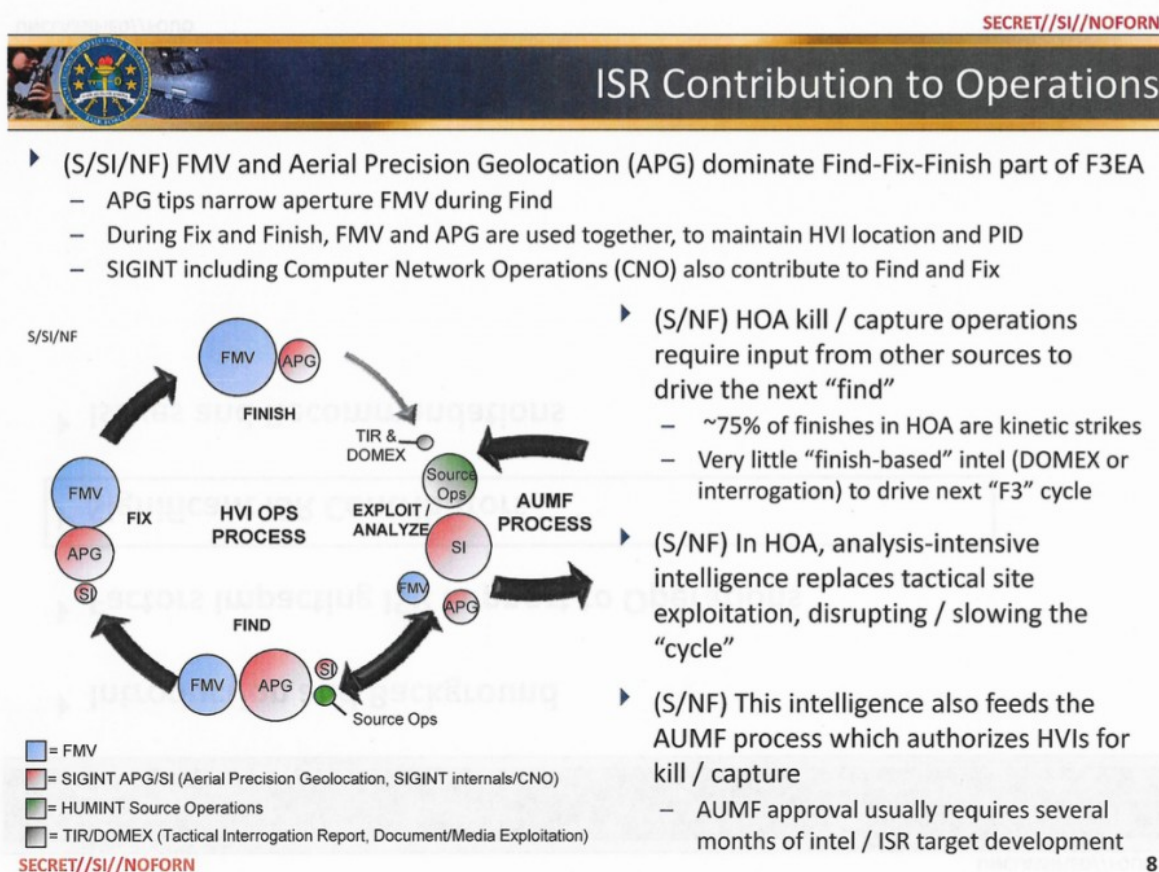
FIND, FIX, FINISH

The find, fix, finish cycle is known in the military as FFF, or F3. But just as critical are two other letters: E and A, for “exploit and analyze,” referring to the use of materials collected on the ground and in detainee interrogations.

F3EA became doctrine in counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan in the mid-2000s. Gen. Stanley McChrystal wrote in his memoir that the simplicity of those “five words in a line ... belied how profoundly it would drive our mission.” In 2008, Flynn, who worked closely with McChrystal before becoming head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, **wrote** that “*Exploit-Analyze* starts the cycle over again by providing leads, or start points, into the network that could be observed and tracked using airborne ISR.”

Deadly strikes thus truncate the find, fix, finish cycle without exploitation and analysis — precisely the components that were lacking in the drone campaign waged in East Africa and Yemen. That shortfall points to one of the contradictions at the heart of the drone program in general: Assassinations are intelligence dead ends.

The ISR study shows that after a “kill operation” there is typically nobody on the ground to collect written material or laptops in the target’s house, or the phone on his body, or capture suspects and ask questions. Yet collection of on-the-ground intelligence of that sort — referred to as DOMEX, for “document and media exploitation,” and TIR, for “tactical interrogation report” — is invaluable for identifying future targets.



A slide from a Pentagon study notes that deadly strikes in Yemen and Somalia reduce the amount of intelligence for future operations. AUMF = 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force; FMV = Full Motion Video; F3EA = Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze; HOA = Horn of Africa

Stating that 75 percent of operations in the region were strikes, and noting that “kill operations significantly reduce the intelligence available from detainees and captured material,” the study recommended an expansion of “capture finishes via host-nation partners for more ‘finish-derived’ intelligence.” One of the problems with that scenario, however, is that security forces in host nations like Yemen and Somalia are profoundly unreliable and have been linked to a wide variety of abuses, including the torture of prisoners.

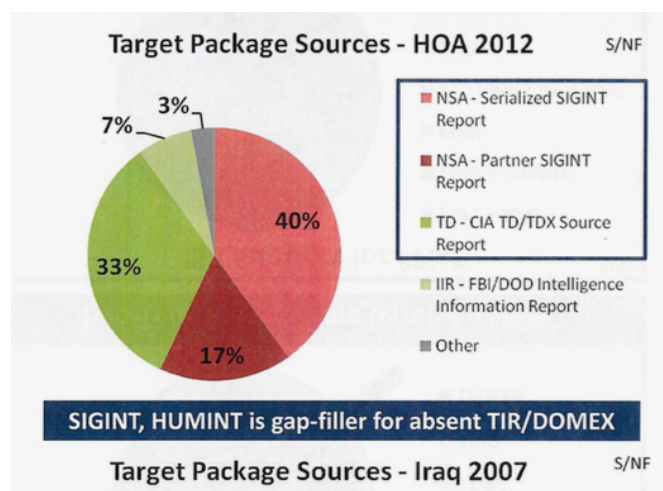
A **report** last year by retired Gen. John Abizaid and former Defense Department official Rosa Brooks noted that the “enormous uncertainties” of drone warfare are “multiplied further when the United States relies

on intelligence and other targeting information provided by a host nation government: How can we be sure we are not being drawn into a civil war or being used to target the domestic political enemies of the host state leadership?”

In 2011, for example, U.S. officials **told** the *Wall Street Journal* that they had killed a local governor because Yemeni officials didn't tell them he was present at a gathering of al Qaeda figures. “We think we got played,” one official said. (The Yemeni government disputed the report.)

Despite such warnings, the drone program has relied heavily on intelligence from other countries. One **slide** describes signals intelligence, or SIGINT, as coming “often from foreign partners,” and another, titled “**Alternatives to Exploit/Analyze**,” states that “in the reduced access environment, national intelligence partners often have the best information and access.”

One way to increase the reliability of host-nation intelligence is to be directly involved in its collection – but this can be risky for soldiers on the ground. The study called for “advance force operations,” including “small teams of special force advisors,” to work with foreign forces to capture combatants, interrogate them, and seize any written material or electronic devices they possess. According to public Special Operations **guidelines**, advance force operations “prepare for near-term” actions by planting tracking devices, conducting reconnaissance missions, and staging for attacks. The documents obtained by *The Inter-*



The military relies heavily on intelligence from electronic communications, much of it provided by foreign governments, but acknowledges that the information is “neither as timely nor as focused as tactical intelligence.”

cept did not specify an optimum number of advisors or where they should be based or how exactly they should be involved in capture or interrogation operations.

Although the study dates from 2013, current Special Operations Commander Joseph Votel **echoed** its findings in July 2015. Votel noted that his troops were working closely with African Union forces and the Somali government to battle al Shabaab. He added, “We get a lot more ... when we actually capture somebody or we capture material than we do when we kill someone.”



A man walks past destroyed buildings in Zinjibar, capital of Abyan province in southern Yemen on Dec. 5, 2012. Photo: Sami-al-Ansi/AFP/Getty Images

THE POVERTY OF SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE

With limited ability to conduct raids or seize materials from targeted individuals in Yemen and Somalia, JSOC relied overwhelmingly on monitoring electronic communications to discover and ultimately locate targets.

The documents state bluntly that SIGINT is an inferior form of intelligence. Yet signals accounted for more than half the intelligence collected on targets, with much of it coming from foreign partners. The rest originated with human intelligence, primarily obtained by the CIA. “These sources,” the study **notes**, “are neither as timely nor as focused as tactical intelligence” from interrogations or seized materials.

Making matters worse, the documents **refer to “poor” and “limited”** capabilities for collecting SIGINT, implying a double bind in which kill operations were reliant on sparse amounts of inferior intelligence.

The disparity with other areas of operation was stark, as a chart contrasting cell data makes clear: In Afghanistan there were 8,900 cell data reports each month, versus 50 for Yemen and 160 for Somalia. Despite that, another chart shows SIGINT comprised more than half the data sources that went into developing targets in Somalia and Yemen in 2012.

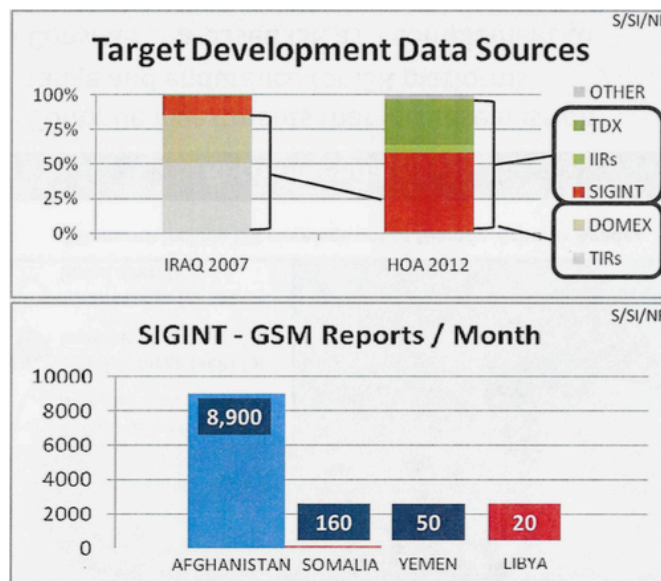
Flynn told *The Intercept* there was “way too much reliance on technical aspects [of intelligence],

like signals intelligence, or even just looking at somebody with unmanned aerial vehicles.”

“I could get on the telephone from somewhere in Somalia, and I know I’m a high-value target, and say in some coded language, ‘The wedding is about to occur in the next 24 hours,’” Flynn said. “That could put all of Europe and the United States on a high-level alert, and it may be just total bullshit. SIGINT is an easy system to fool and that’s why it has to be validated by other INTs – like HUMINT. You have to ensure that the person is actually there at that location because what you really intercepted was the phone.”

In addition to using SIGINT to identify and find new targets, the documents **detail** how military analysts also relied on such intelligence to make sure that they had the correct person in their sights and to estimate the harm to civilians before a strike. After locating a target, usually by his cellphone or other electronics, analysts would study video feeds from surveillance aircraft “to build near-certainty via identification of distinguishing physical characteristics.”

A British intelligence document on targeted killing in Afghanistan, which was among the Snowden files, describes a similar process of “monitoring a fixed location, and tracking any persons moving away from that location, and identifying if a similar pattern is experienced



Cellphone data was critical for finding and identifying targets, yet a chart from a Pentagon study shows that the military had far less information in Yemen and Somalia than it was accustomed to having in Afghanistan. DOMEX = Document and Media Exploitation; GSM = Global System for Mobile communication; HOA = Horn of Africa; IIRs = Intelligence Information Reports; SIGINT = Signals Intelligence; TIRs = Tactical Interrogation Reports.

through SIGINT collect.” The document explains that “other visual indicators may be used to aid the establishment of [positive identification]” including “description of clothing” or “gait.” After a shot, according to the British document and case studies in the Pentagon’s ISR report, drones would hover to determine if their target had been hit, collecting video and evidence of whether the cellphone had been eliminated. (The British intelligence agency, GCHQ, declined to comment on the document.)

SECRET//SI//NOFORN

ISR Platforms and Capabilities

Current ISR Systems used in HOA Small-Footprint Operations

System	Sensor					Platform				# of Aircraft in theater (as of 30 June 2012)	Armed for Operations (X)	Manned (M) Or Unmanned (U)
	FMV	HD-FMV	PTT COMINT	DNR COMINT	APG	Time On Station (hours) - Mogadishu	Time On Station (hours) - Sana'a	Cruise Speed (KIAS)	Max Endurance (Hours)			
P-3 MS	2		X	X	X	4	5	228	12	2		M
Medium Fixed Wing (MFW)	X		X	X	X	4	n/a	unk	8	2	X	M
U-28	2		X		X	--	3	270	5	6	X	M
MQ-1 Predator	1		X		X	6	12	70-90	20	6	X	U
MQ-9 Reaper	1	X	X		X	9	10	175	14	4	X	U
Scan Eagle	X					13	n/a	55	15	1 USN Det		U
MC-12 Liberty (Ext'd Range)	1		X		X	2(4)	4 (6)	300	6 (8)			M

SECRET//SI//NOFORN

Red text denotes capabilities not in theater

► (S/NF) The PID-providing phenomenologies, HD-FMV and DNR COMINT, are largely absent from ISR systems operating in HOA

- Not all MQ-9s have HD-FMV
- MFW platforms currently only fly in Somalia
- P-3 MS is a low-density / high-demand platform currently not in Theater

SECRET//SI//NOFORN

Source: HOA Orbit Tracker, as of June, 2012 & aircraft spec sheets ; IBM Analysis


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A chart comparing the surveillance capabilities of the various drones and aircraft flying over Yemen and Somalia in 2012. APG = Aerial Precision Geolocation; DNR COMINT = Dial Network Recognition Communications Intelligence; ISR = Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; FMV = Full Motion Video; PTT COMINT = Push-to-Talk Communications Intelligence.

Yet according to the ISR study, the military faced “critical shortfalls of capabilities” in the technologies enabling that kind of precise sur-

veillance and post-strike assessment. At the time of the study, only some of the Reaper drones had high-definition video, and most of the aircraft over the region lacked the ability to collect “dial number recognition” data.

The study cites these shortcomings as an explanation for the low rate of successful strikes against the targets on the military’s kill list in Yemen and Somalia, especially in comparison with Iraq and Afghanistan. It presents the failings primarily as an issue of efficiency, with little mention of the possible consequence of bad intelligence leading to killing the wrong people.

Additional reporting:  **Jeremy Scahill**
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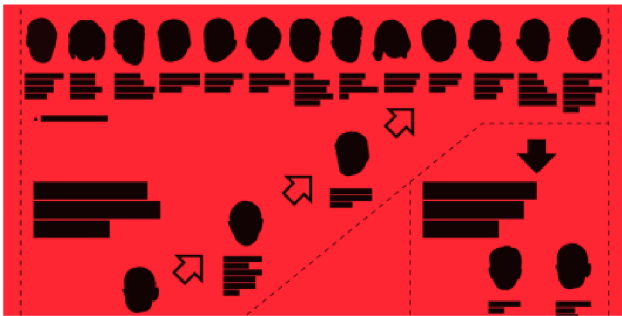


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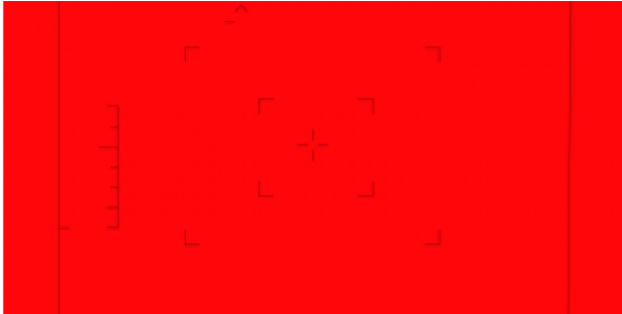
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ARTICLE №7 OF 8

THE DRONE PAPERS



Ryan Gallagher

October 15 2015, 4:59 a.m.

As he walked through the busy streets of London, Bilal el-Berjawi was glancing over his shoulder. Everywhere he went, he suspected he was being followed. Within a few years —

4,000 miles away in remote Somalia — he would be dead, killed by a secret U.S. drone strike.



Andrew Testa

A SMALL AND STOCKY British-Lebanese citizen with a head of thick dark hair, Berjawi had grown up much like any other young boy in the United Kingdom's capital city, attending school during the day and playing soccer with friends in his free time. But by his early 20s he was leading no ordinary life. He was suspected of having cultivated ties with senior al Qaeda militants in East Africa, his British citizenship was abruptly revoked, and he was placed on a U.S. kill list.

In January 2012, Berjawi met his sudden end, about 10 miles northwest of Mogadishu, when a missile crashed into his white car and blasted it beyond recognition.

At the time of Berjawi's death, the Associated Press **reported** that the missile strike targeting him had been carried out by a drone, citing an

anonymous U.S. official. *The Economist* criticized the secrecy surrounding the attack and questioned whether it had amounted to a “very British execution.”

Now, a classified U.S. document obtained by *The Intercept* shines new light on the circumstances surrounding Berjawi’s death. It reveals that the U.S. government was monitoring him for at least five years as he traveled between London and Somalia; that he was targeted by a covert special operations unit running a fleet of more than two dozen drones, fighter jets, and other aircraft out of East Africa; and that cellphone surveillance facilitated the strike that killed him.

The document, a case study included in a secret 2013 report by the Pentagon’s Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Task Force, does not mention Berjawi by name, instead referring to a target code-named “Objective Peckham.” But it contains enough specific details about the target’s movements and the time and place of the attack that killed him to confirm his identity beyond doubt.



A video produced by al Shabaab purports to show Berjawi’s mangled vehicle in the aftermath of the drone strike that killed him on Jan. 21, 2012.

The Intercept has pieced together the final years of Berjawi’s life based on the Pentagon case study, public records, interviews with individuals who knew him, and a transcript of a long conversation Berjawi had in April 2009 with members of Cage, a London-based rights group, in which he discussed his encounters with security agencies in the U.K. and Kenya.

The story of Berjawi’s life and death raises new questions about the British government’s role in the targeted assassination of its own citi-

zens — also providing unique insight into covert U.S. military actions in the Horn of Africa and their impact on al Qaeda and its affiliate in the region, al Shabaab.



Church Street Market near Edgware Road, northwest London. Sept. 29, 2015. Photo: Andrew Testa for The Intercept

BERJAWI — WHO WAS KNOWN by a variety of other names, including Bilal Abul-Jariya, Abu Omar, and Abu Hafsa — spent his youth in the St. John's Wood district of northwest London, living in an apartment a short walk from Abbey Road Studios. He was a baby when his mother moved him, along with his sister and brother, to the United Kingdom.

According to Berjawi's own account of his upbringing, provided to Cage and reviewed by *The Intercept*, he was born in Lebanon in 1990 and came to London the same year. But passport records uncovered by Ugandan

media indicate that he may in fact have been born in September 1984, which would make him 27 at the time of his death.

As a teenager, Berjawi hung around with his friends on London's busy Edgware Road and frequented some of the shisha bars and Lebanese food stores scattered across the area.

Tam Hussein, a former youth worker for a community organization in north London, met Berjawi for the first time around 2003. Berjawi was 16 or 17 at the time, according to Hussein. "He was a good kid back then," Hussein told me. "But he was a roughneck, he was a fighter. That's what he was known for."

Hussein recalled that Berjawi was associated with a Muslim gang in north London that was embroiled in fights with rival Irish youths. But he saw no sign that Berjawi was involved in anything other than unruly teenage behavior.

On one occasion, Berjawi and a group of his friends were given the opportunity to go on a vacation overseas, funded by the community organization Hussein worked for. Hussein recalls that the group chose a holiday resort in Benidorm, on the east coast of Spain, where they were thrown out of a hotel for being too raucous.

"They got up to such craziness, smashed up a hotel room," Hussein said. "I never saw him [Berjawi] drinking, but obviously he got up to – he liked all the stuff that young guys like, partying and stuff like that."

The period between 2003 and 2006 appears to have been a crucial and formative time in Berjawi's life, when he transitioned from partying in Spain and playing soccer in London parks to joining up with al Qaeda-affiliated militants in Somalia.

According to the [Pentagon case study](https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-life-and-death-of-objective-peckham/), in 2006 Berjawi left London for a short period and attended a training camp called "Bayt al-Jinn," where

he received explosives training. He then “returned to the U.K. and provided financial support to AQ allied elements in East Africa.”

The case study does not specify the location of the Bayt al-Jinn camp. However, a previously secret detainee report on a Kenyan terror suspect held at Guantánamo, **published by WikiLeaks** in 2011, mentions a “Bayt Jinn House” in Mogadishu that was allegedly frequented by international al Qaeda operatives in the region. The Guantánamo report also states that a group known as the “London boys” – of which Berjawi was a member – attended a training camp in Mogadishu in the fall of 2006.

The U.S. government accounts are corroborated by a **martyrdom biography** of Berjawi published on jihadi Internet forums after his death, which states that he “joined with the Mujahideen in Somalia during the time of the Islamic Courts Union,” referring to a coalition of Sharia courts that gained control of large parts of Somalia in 2006. There he attended his “first training,” according to the biography, then returned to the U.K., where he took responsibility for “the collection of funds and its delivery.”



Abbey Road in St. John's Wood, London. Sept. 29, 2015. Photo: Andrew Testa for The Intercept

AFTER RETURNING FROM Somalia in 2006, Berjawi does not appear to have had any direct contact with British police or security agencies. Despite his apparent instruction at an al Qaeda-affiliated camp, he was not arrested on his way back to England, suggesting that intelligence collected by the U.S. about his whereabouts might not have been immediately shared with British agencies. Lynne Arnold, a spokesperson for London's Metropolitan Police, declined to answer questions for this story, saying she was "not able to discuss" why Berjawi was not arrested or whether U.S. authorities had shared any information about him.

According to the interview conducted by Cage, which campaigns on behalf of terrorism suspects who are denied legal rights, Berjawi did not begin to notice that British authorities were interested in him until about 2007.

That year, counterterrorism forces in Nairobi detained two of Berjawi's friends from London, who had fled Somalia after war broke out with Ethiopia. The pair were later released without charge. Upon their return to London, the men told Berjawi that during their detention in Kenya, British agents had questioned them and shown them his photograph.

"That's when I realized myself I was starting to be followed," Berjawi said. "I would see someone — the same person — following me, wherever I was. The same car — I actually even memorized the number plate."

Berjawi's suspicions appear to have been further confirmed between 2007 and 2008. During a trip to Lebanon, he was stopped at a Lebanese airport and questioned about why he had traveled to the country. He told the authorities he was visiting family, gave them a phone number for his uncle, and eventually they let him through. Berjawi was interrogated again on his way out of Lebanon, but arrived back in London without any problems. A few days after his return, however, Berjawi called his uncle and learned that he had been approached by Lebanese counterterrorism agents, who had been asking questions about him.

BY EARLY 2009, BERJAWI was working in London with his stepfather as a plumber and air-conditioning engineer. He had gotten married, had a baby girl, and his wife was pregnant with another child, this time a boy. But Berjawi was still on the radar of security agencies, and he was about to experience his first serious interrogation.

With a childhood friend named Mohamed Sakr, Berjawi arranged a trip to Kenya. According to his account, he wanted to go on a wildlife safari, but counterterrorism officials in Kenya suspected otherwise. When he arrived in the Mombasa airport, Berjawi was stopped and questioned. He was permitted into the country, but noticed a man of Somali origin following him everywhere, whom he suspected was some sort of spy.

“Wherever I go to eat, whatever safari park we go to, he’s always there on his phone,” Berjawi told Cage. “When I stop, he stops; when I walk, he walks.”

After a few days in Mombasa, Berjawi and Sakr traveled to Nairobi, perhaps in an effort to avoid the man they believed was tailing them. When they arrived, the pair stayed at the family home of Naji Mansour, an American citizen living in Nyari, an affluent Nairobi neighborhood located near the United Nations Africa headquarters.

Mansour, who was 32 at the time, lived with his wife and two children in a large house in a compound with its own gym, games room, and garden. The main part of the house had four bedrooms, but there were two additional bedrooms in a separate wing that the family kept for guests.

Recalling how he first came into contact with Berjawi and Sakr, Mansour told me that he put them up as a favor to a friend named Mohamed, whom he had met in Dubai while working briefly for a tech company there that provided information security services.

According to Mansour, Berjawi and Sakr claimed they had traveled to Kenya to research a substance known as “miraa” – or khat – an amphetamine-like stimulant grown and consumed in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Mansour’s first impression of the pair was that they were “regular Joes.” They lounged around the house, watched movies, played games with his children, and occasionally prayed. “But they didn’t seem like hardcore, staunch Muslims,” Mansour said.

At first, Berjawi and Sakr said they would only need a place to stay for a few days. But a few days soon turned into a week. When Mansour asked about their plans, he was told they were waiting for some money to be sent to them before they moved on.

“I didn’t feel like they were a threat in any way, even when they overstayed,” said Mansour. “The only strange thing that I noticed from them the whole time is that it seemed like they weren’t trying to go out; they weren’t trying to leave the house.”



Illustration: The Intercept

Suddenly, about two weeks into their stay, in February 2009, Kenyan anti-terror police surrounded Mansour’s Nairobi house. Berjawi was playing pool in the games room when he heard a loud series of knocks at the door. He peered through a curtain and saw heavily armed Kenyan officers, a helicopter flying above, and lots of cars. The police then stormed the property, told Berjawi to get on the floor, and pointed a gun at his head while he was searched.

Berjawi told Cage that he and Sakr were handcuffed, taken to the anti-terror police headquarters, and placed in separate cells. Berjawi described his cell as a “black hole” with “no pillows, no light, nothing,” and said that when he asked for food a guard told him that he had to drink his own urine.

Later that day, Berjawi said he was taken from his cell through a long dark corridor to a private room. He was dazzled by the bright lights when the door opened, but when his eyes regained focus he could see about five men, dressed smartly in suits.

“They looked like professional people, y’know, they didn’t look like they belonged there,” Berjawi later recalled. “You could tell the difference between them and the guards that were working there. With the guards you can smell the sweat on them, and some of them were even drunk.”

Berjawi said the men accused him of being an al Qaeda suicide bomber who had come to Kenya as part of a plot to attack the Israeli Embassy and an Israeli-owned supermarket. He denied the allegations and requested a lawyer. “My friend, this is Africa,” he recalled being told. “In Africa, the only thing we can give you is black magic.”

For four days, Berjawi and Sakr were held in custody and repeatedly interrogated. According to Berjawi, when he was eventually given some food, a porridge-like dish called “ugali,” the guards had sprinkled it with cigarette ash. He claimed they also asked him if he was gay and insinuated that they were going to send in a man who would rape him. Toward the end of the ordeal, Berjawi said that both he and Sakr endured several mock executions. “They just threw us out the car in the forest, and we heard ‘tchck-tchk’ – you know, the noise was there, and then I’d feel a gun to the back of my head, like that, but ... nothing. Then they’d just all laugh, pick us back up, throw us back into the car, then they’d drive again. They did this twice or three times.”

(Kenya's National Police Service, the authority responsible for law enforcement in the country, did not respond to requests for comment on this story.)

ACCORDING TO BERJAWI, there were no British agents present during his interrogations in Kenya. He did believe, however, that British government operatives were feeding questions to the Kenyans, who seemed to know many highly specific details about his life in London, such as his daughter's name, where he played soccer, the names of his friends, and which mosque he attended.

On the final day of his detention, a woman Berjawi said was from the British Embassy visited him, asked how he was doing, and handed him some forms to fill out. Shortly afterward, he was released. Together with Sakr, Berjawi was flown back to London accompanied by four Kenyan agents.

When the plane touched down, an announcement came over the speakers instructing all passengers to remain in their seats. A large group of "big white built men came on the plane with suits," Berjawi later recounted. "One of them directly looked at me and smiled, and he called me, 'Bilal, would you like to stand up?'"

The men ushered Berjawi and Sakr off the plane, at which point the friends were separated. The men told Berjawi they were from the British domestic security agency, MI5.

Over a period of about 10 hours, the agents interrogated him about his visit to Kenya and warned him he was not allowed to decline to answer their questions, suggesting he was detained under a British law, the **Terrorism Act**, which makes it a criminal offense to respond with "no comment."

The British agents snapped photographs of Berjawi and took his fingerprints. He recalled that they were apologetic, telling him, “We have to do this.” But he was left feeling aggrieved; after interrogating him, the agents took his money and shoes, handed him his clothes in a garbage bag, and left him alone in the airport, barefoot, without any means to return to his home in northwest London.

A few weeks later, Berjawi called his uncle in Lebanon, who described receiving another visit from counterterrorism agents. This time, the agents informed him that Berjawi was “involved in al Qaeda,” based on “information from Britain.” They emphasized that his nephew shouldn’t return to Lebanon or there would be problems.

Meanwhile, Berjawi began to suspect that he was being followed each time he set foot outside his London home. On one occasion, shortly after he returned from Kenya, he went out to the supermarket and noticed two men who he believed were tailing him. On the street, he bumped into an old friend and stopped for a quick conversation. Ber-

jawi said that the two men subsequently approached his friend, who was taken away in a car to a nearby police station and interrogated.

The increased scrutiny appears to have agitated and unsettled Berjawi, though he still had not been arrested in the U.K. or charged with any crimes.

In April 2009, he approached Cage to complain that he was being “harassed” by security services, according to the transcript of the meeting **shared with** *The Intercept*.

“I don’t want to be harassed, followed – I feel intimidated, I’ve got a lot of side effects, you know,” Berjawi told the advocacy group. “My friends have been scared away from me because they’ve been approached. I feel isolated. ... It’s becoming a bit too much.”



Church Street Market near Edgware Road, northwest London. Sept. 29, 2015. Photo: Andrew Testa for The Intercept

WITHIN SIX MONTHS, in October 2009, both Berjawi and his friend Sakr were back in Somalia. A year later, in September 2010, the British government revoked the passports of both men under the British Nationality Act, severing its legal obligations to uphold their rights as citizens, a move that may have paved the way for their assassination.

Berjawi wanted to appeal the decision to revoke his passport, and in October 2010 sent an email to a contact at Cage asking the organization to instruct his lawyer, Saghir Hussain, to represent him in the case. Hussain told me that there were difficulties filing the appeal, primarily because of security concerns about talking over the phone to Berjawi in Somalia.

“I said to his family, ‘Look, I can’t guarantee that while he’s communicating with us he won’t be droned and killed,’” Hussain recalled. “That’s why it was decided that it was too risky for us to carry on.”

As it turned out, Hussain’s concerns were well-founded.

Since 2006, according to the secret Pentagon study, a covert Joint Special Operations Command unit known as TF 48-4 had been keeping close tabs on Berjawi’s movements. He had been featured on a so-called

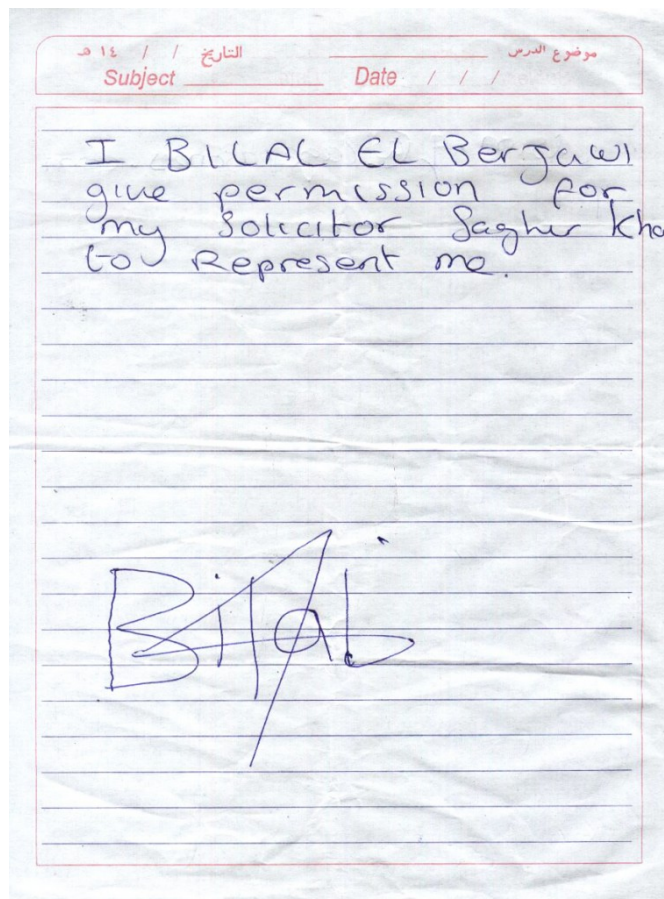
baseball card, used by the U.S. government to encapsulate information about candidates for assassination, and had thus entered a process for kill or capture known as “find, fix, finish,” or FFF.

By December 2009, the document alleges, Berjawi was helping to “facilitate money, equipment, and fighters” through the U.K. to Somalia. Throughout 2010, the U.S. government collected intelligence on him through intercepted communications, and before long operators pinpointed his location.

On June 23, 2011, Berjawi was tracked to an area near Kismayo, a port city some 250 miles from Mogadishu. The special operations unit launched a missile strike, according to the document, but it was unsuccessful due to a malfunction and other problems related to “approval authorities.”

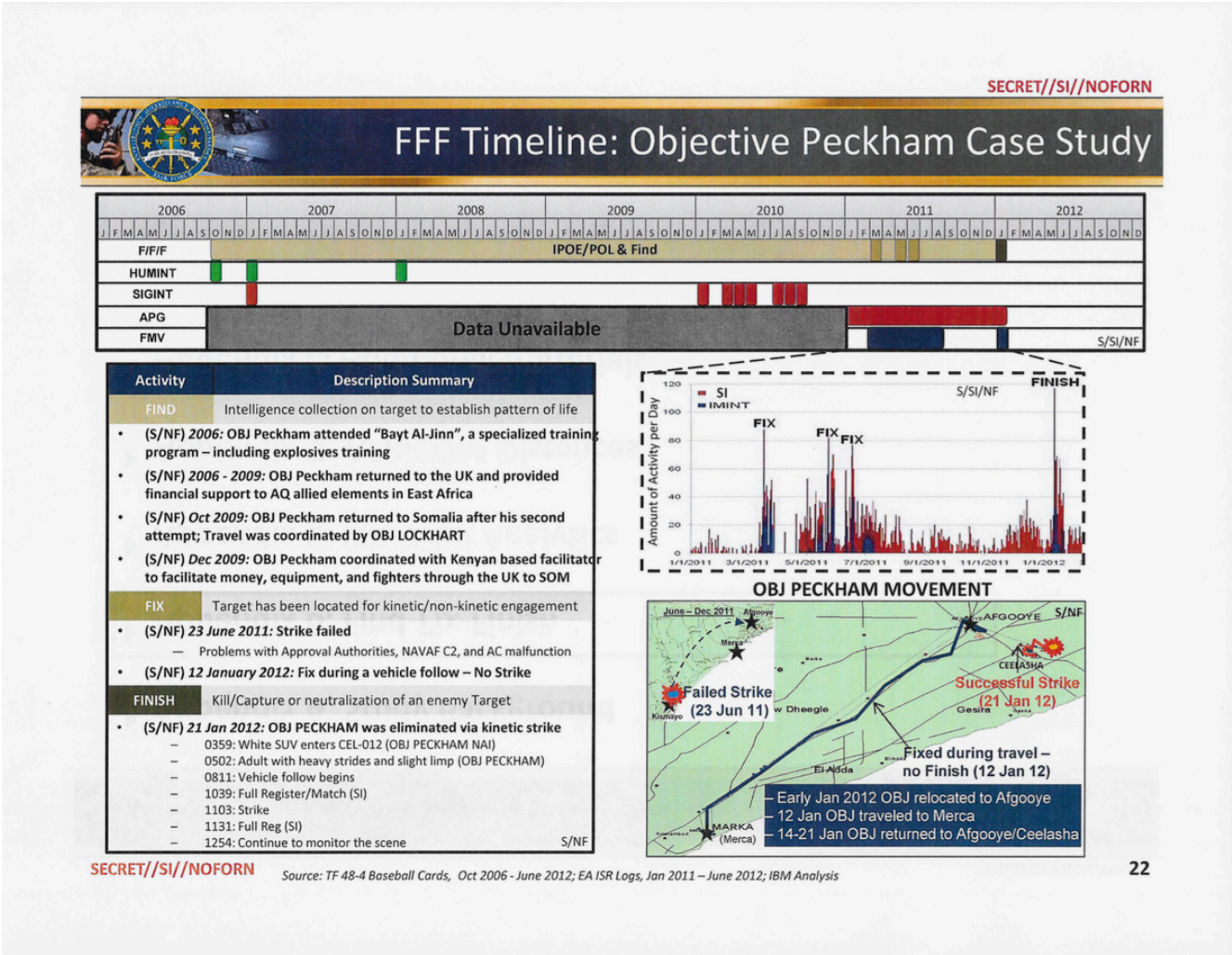
Although Berjawi was not killed, he may have been wounded in the attack or in another carried out around the same time. On June 24, the Associated Press **reported** a missile strike late the previous day on a convoy of al Qaeda-linked militants near Kismayo, which injured two or three of the fighters.

Two weeks later, Somali media **reported** that Berjawi, a “senior officer” with al Qaeda, was believed to have been injured in an attack and had traveled to Kenya for medical treatment.



A note written by Berjawi in October 2010, after his U.K. citizenship was revoked. No appeal was filed, and he was killed by a U.S. drone strike on Jan. 21, 2012.

It was not until the following year that U.S. forces again identified Berjawi’s location.



The case study timeline describes an “adult with heavy strides and slight limp (OBJ PECKHAM)” at 5:02 a.m. Three hours later, at 8:11 a.m., a “vehicle follow begins.” At 10:39 a.m. the timeline shows that surveillance equipment logged a “Full Register/Match” of a cellphone in the target area, meaning the unique identifying codes of a SIM card and handset associated with Berjawi had been confirmed by the special operations unit.

Twenty-four minutes later, at 11:03 a.m., Bilal el-Berjawi, otherwise known as Objective Peckham, “was eliminated via kinetic strike,” the entire front half of his vehicle mangled by the explosion.

The timeline of the strike, oddly, shows another match with the cellphone at 11:31 a.m. The drone continued “to monitor the scene.”

The following day a spokesperson for al Shabaab calling himself Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage **confirmed** the death of Berjawi, whom he described as a senior al Qaeda commander in Somalia. Rage said that Berjawi had been killed by a U.S. drone, and vowed revenge for the killing. He added: “We take his death as congratulation, thanks to Allah. ... His martyrdom dream has just become true.”

As news of Berjawi’s demise spread, it fueled paranoia within elements of al Qaeda in Somalia. Seven months prior to his death, al Qaeda’s chief in East Africa, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, had also **been killed**. Berjawi was said to have been close to Mohammed, and perhaps was his successor, so when he too died in a sudden attack there were suspicions that al Shabaab was carrying out some kind of clandestine coup.

Some news reports out of Kenya initially suggested the attack on Berjawi was an “**inside job**,” and that he had been assassinated due to a power struggle. **Subsequently**, one Somali outlet reported that at least 100 foreign al Qaeda fighters in Somalia had fled the country, partly due to leadership squabbles.

“It is true that those brothers left us and went to Yemen due to some minor internal misunderstandings amongst ourselves,” an al Shabaab spokesperson was quoted as saying at the time. “This started when we lost our brother, Bilal el-Berjawi, on January 21.”

Once it became apparent that Berjawi had in fact been killed in a U.S. drone strike, the groups appear to have settled their differences and strengthened their alliance. Three weeks after Berjawi’s death, the leaders of both al Qaeda and al Shabaab appeared in a video together. Al Shabaab **pledged** its allegiance to al Qaeda and vowed that it would “march with you as loyal soldiers.”



Lisson Grove in northwest London. Sept. 29, 2015. Photo: Andrew Testa for The Intercept

SHORTLY BEFORE BERJAWI was killed, his wife back in London had given birth to a new baby boy. She is believed to have spent time with Ber-

jawi in Somalia but had returned to London in 2011.

Upon hearing about the birth of his third child, Berjawi reportedly phoned his wife while she was in the hospital, hours before he was killed. Relatives speculated that it was this phone call that had exposed him as a target for the drone strike. That seems unlikely, however. According to the timeline obtained by *The Intercept*, Berjawi's location had already been established by the covert special operations unit nine days prior to the lethal attack. Cellphone surveillance helped pinpoint him on the day he died, but it is unclear whether the phone in question belonged to Berjawi, or whether it had been covertly placed in his vehicle by someone else to aid the strike.

Six months after Berjawi's death, in July 2012, al Shabaab **publicly executed** three men accused of helping British and American spy agencies kill Berjawi. In a propaganda video, the alleged informants confessed to having hidden a cellphone in Berjawi's vehicle so that he could be tracked and bombed. One of the accused informants, Isaac Omar Hassan, said a man working with the CIA in Mogadishu handed him a Nokia X2 cellphone and an envelope containing \$4,000 cash. He was asked to place the phone in Berjawi's vehicle and make sure it was turned on when requested, which he said he did on the day Berjawi was targeted.

BERJAWI'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND Mohamed Sakr, whom he had traveled with on his trips to Kenya and Somalia, met a similar fate.

In February 2012, about a month after Berjawi's demise, Sakr was also killed in a reported U.S. drone strike in Somalia.

The revocation of Berjawi's and Sakr's British passports prior to their deaths by U.S. drone strike has **raised questions** about whether the British government was secretly complicit in their assassination.

Ben Stack, a spokesperson for the U.K. **Home Office**, declined to comment for this story when asked whether the passports were revoked as part of a coordinated sequence of events that culminated in deadly attacks by U.S. special operations forces. “We don’t routinely comment on security matters,” he said.

Kat Craig, a lawyer with the London-based human rights group **Reprieve**, told me that she believed there was “mounting evidence” that the British government has used “citizenship-stripping” as a tactic to remove legal obstacles to killing people suspected of becoming affiliated with terrorist groups.



Bilal el-Berjawi holding an AK-47 rifle in a martyrdom video produced after his death by al Shabaab’s media wing.

“If the U.K. government had any role in these men’s deaths – including revocation of their citizenship to facilitate extra-judicial killings – then the public has a right to know,” Craig said. “Our government cannot be involved in secret executions. If people are accused of wrongdoing they should be brought before a court and tried. That is what it means to live in a democracy that adheres to the rule of law.”

Since 2006, the British government has reportedly **deprived** at least 27 people of their U.K. citizenship on national security grounds, deeming their presence “not conducive to the public good.” The power to revoke a person’s citizenship rests solely with a government minister, though the decision can be challenged through a controversial immigration court. When cases are brought on national security grounds, they are routinely based on secret evidence, meaning the accusations against individuals are withheld from them and their lawyers.

“The net effect of the practice,” according to Craig, is “not only to remove judicial oversight from a possible life and death decision, but also to close the doors of the court on anyone who seeks to expose some of the gravest abuses being committed by Western governments.”

There have **reportedly** been at least 10 British citizens killed in drone attacks as part of a covert campaign that, between 2008 and 2015, has gradually expanded from Pakistan to Somalia and now to Syria. Most recently, in late August, Islamic State computer hacker Junaid Hussain, a former resident of Birmingham, England, was **assassinated** on the outskirts of Raqqa, Syria, by a U.S. strike. Several days earlier, in another attack near Raqqa, the U.K. government **deployed** its own drones for the first time to target British citizens, killing Islamic State recruits Ruhul Amin and Reyaad Khan while they were traveling together in a car.

It remains unclear whether, like Berjawi and Sakr, these targets had their British passports revoked before they were killed. Stack, the Home Office spokesperson, would not discuss the citizenship status of Hussain, Amin, Khan, or other Brits killed by drones. “We don’t talk about individual cases and also we don’t comment on matters of national security,” he told me.



Regent's Park Mosque, northwest London. Sept. 29, 2015. Photo: Andrew Testa for The Intercept

AROUND THE COMMUNITY in which Berjawi grew up, the reverberations of his life and death continue to be felt. Most recently, **news reports** have featured his name as a one-time associate of Mohammed Emwazi, better known as the masked Islamic State executioner nicknamed “Jihadi John.” Emwazi lived near Berjawi in northwest London, and a source familiar with his circle of friends told me that the pair had attended the same school. Emwazi was a few years younger than Berjawi and “looked up” to him, according to the source, who asked not to be named.

Several of Berjawi's former friends still live and work in London but have distanced themselves from the controversy surrounding him. One of Berjawi's closest former friends now works as a bus driver; another of

his peers has since become an imam. Many, including Berjawi's family members and neighbors, are reluctant to talk about him publicly.

On the quiet tree-lined street in London where Berjawi spent his youth, cars come and go and a new generation of children laugh and play games out on the sidewalk. At Berjawi's old apartment, where some members of his family still live, there is a creased Arabic poster pinned to the door with a message for visitors. "Whoever believes in God and the Judgment Day," it reads, "let him speak up, or remain silent."

Top photo: Church Street Market near Edgware Road, London. Sept. 29, 2015. Andrew Testa for The Intercept

Additional reporting:



Jeremy Scahill



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Jeremy Scahill

The whistleblower who leaked the drone papers believes the public is entitled to know how people are placed on kill lists and assassinated on orders from the president.

02.

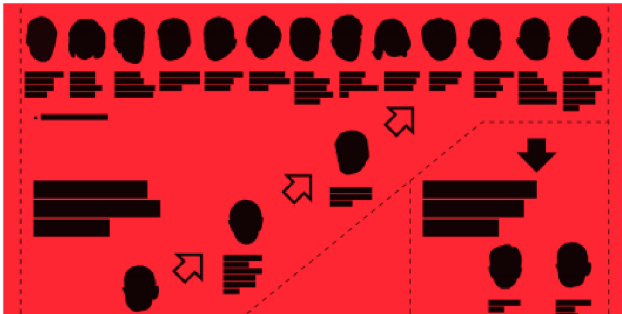


A VISUAL GLOSSARY

Josh Begley

Decoding the language of covert warfare.

03.



THE KILL CHAIN

Cora Currier

New details about the secret criteria for drone strikes and how the White House approves targets.

04.



FIND, FIX, FINISH

Jeremy Scahill

The tip of the spear in the Obama administration's ramped up wars in Somalia and Yemen was a special operations task force called TF 48-4.

05.

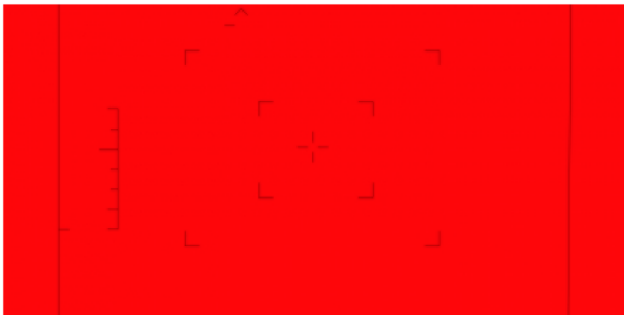


MANHUNTING IN THE HINDU KUSH

Ryan Devereaux

Leaked documents detailing a multi-year U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan reveal the strategic limits and startling human costs of drone warfare.

06.



FIRING BLIND

Cora Currier, Peter Maass

A secret Pentagon study highlights the chronic flaws in intelligence used for drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia.

07.

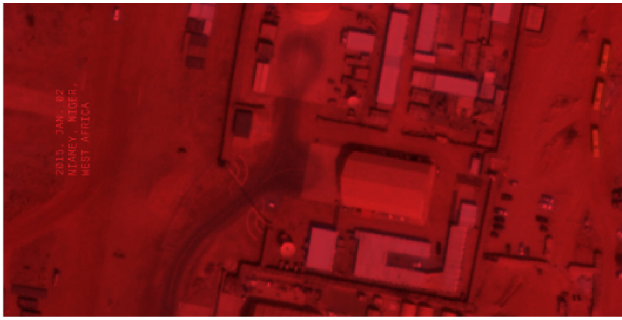


THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OBJECTIVE PECKHAM

Ryan Gallagher

For years Bilal el-Berjawi traveled freely from the U.K. to Somalia under the watchful eyes of intelligence services. Then the U.S. killed him with a drone strike.

08.



TARGET AFRICA

Nick Turse

To reduce the “tyranny of distance,” drones fly from bases in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Navy ships.

09. GLOSSARY

THE ALPHABET OF ASSASSINATION

A guide to the acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms used in *The Drone Papers*.

10. DOCUMENTS

SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 2/13 SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 5/13 OPERATION HAYMAKER GEOLOCATION WATCHLIST

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08.

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THE DRONE PAPERS



Nick Turse

October 15 2015, 4:59 a.m.

“Morning dawns at length in Africa. The night has been long and dark. The opening day has a hopeful outlook and also an aspect of uncertainty. ... For many years little colonies, trading-posts, and slave-marts have fringed its borders; but the vast interior has remained a blank.” — *Historical Sketch of the*

Missions of the American Board in Africa, Samuel Bartlett (1880)



ERADICATING BLANK SPACES on maps of the “dark continent” was an obsession of Western powers during the 19th-century scramble for Africa. Today, a new scramble is underway to eradicate a different set of blank spots. The U.S. military has, since 9/11, engaged in a largely covert effort to extend its footprint across the continent with a network of mostly small and mostly low-profile camps. Some serve as **staging areas** for quick-reaction forces or bare-boned outposts where special ops teams can advise local proxies; some can accommodate large cargo planes, others only small surveillance aircraft. All have one mission in common: to eradicate what the military calls the “**tyranny of distance**.” These facilities allow U.S. forces to surveil and operate on larger and larger swaths of the continent – and, increasingly, to strike targets with drones and manned aircraft.



Document

TF 48-4 FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION

According to an internal 2013 **Pentagon study** obtained by *The Intercept* on secret drone operations in Somalia and Yemen between January 2011 and sum-

mer 2012, a secretive unit known as Task Force 48-4 carried out a shadow war in the region. The task force, with its headquarters at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, operated from outposts in Nairobi, Kenya, and Sanaa, Yemen. The aircraft it used – manned and remotely piloted – were based out of airfields in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya, as well as ships off the coast of East Africa.

U.S. Africa Command – the umbrella organization for U.S. military activities on the continent, known as Africom – insists that it maintains only a “**small footprint**” in Africa and claims that Camp Lemonnier, a former **French Foreign Legion** outpost, is its only full-fledged base. However, a number of new facilities have been opened in recent years, and even Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has acknowledged that Lemonnier serves as “a hub with lots of spokes out there on the continent and in the region.”



Sources: 1) [ISR study](#); 2) [ISR study](#); 3) [ISR study](#); 4) [ISR study](#); 4) [ISR study](#); 6) [Foreign Policy](#); 7) [The Washington Post](#); 8) [Foreign Policy](#); 9) [The Washington Post](#); 10) [The Washington Post](#); 11) [The Washington Post](#); 12) [The Washington Post](#); 13) [The New York Times](#); 14) [The Washington Post](#)

One of those spokes can be found just 10 kilometers southwest of Camp Lemonnier. After numerous **mishaps** and crashes, drone operations were moved from the camp to the more **remote Chabelley Airfield** in September 2013. Predator drones have also been based in the cities of **Niamey** in Niger and **N’Djamena** in Chad, while Reaper drones have been **flown** out of Seychelles International Airport. The Pentagon study,

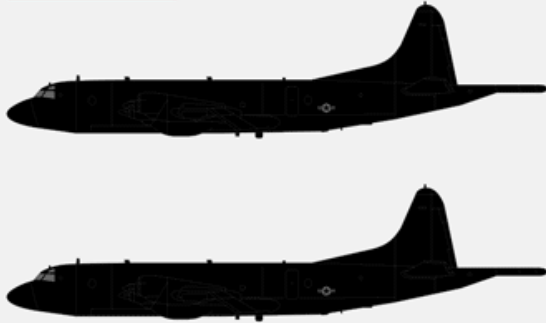
conducted by the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Task Force, also notes that, as of June 2012, there were two contractor-operated drones, one Predator and one Reaper, flying out of **Arba Minch**, Ethiopia. Off the coast of East Africa, a detachment equipped to dispatch a **Scan Eagle**, a low-cost, low-tech drone used by the Navy, or an **MQ-8 Fire Scout**, a remotely piloted helicopter, added to the regional array of surveillance assets, as did those associated with “Armada Sweep,” a ship-based system for collecting electronic communications. Additionally, two manned fixed-wing aircraft were based in Manda Bay, Kenya. Recent reports also indicate that the military’s Joint Special Operations Command, or JSOC, is now working out of two bases in **Somalia** – one in Kismayo, the other in Baledogle.

While generally austere, many of these bases – including the airfields in **Chabelley** and **Manda Bay** – have expanded in recent years, with more on the way. Last year, for example, Capt. Rick Cook, who at the time was chief of Africom’s engineer division, **mentioned** the potential for a “base-like facility” that would be “semi-permanent” and “capable of air operations” in Niger. The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2016, **introduced** in April, **requests** \$50 million for construction of an “Airfield and Base Camp at Agadez, Niger ... to support operations in western Africa.”

Since 9/11, a multitude of other facilities – including staging areas, cooperative security locations and forward operating locations – have also popped up (or been beefed up) in Burkina Faso, **Cameroon**, Central African Republic, **Gabon**, **Ghana**, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, South Sudan, and Uganda. A 2011 report by Lauren Ploch, an analyst in African affairs with the Congressional Research Service, also mentioned U.S. military access to locations in Botswana, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, and Zambia. According to Sam Cooks, a liaison officer with the Defense Logistics Agency, the U.S. military has **struck** 29 agreements to use international airports in Africa as refueling centers. These locations

are only some of the nodes in a growing network of outposts facilitating an increasing number of missions by the 5,000 to 8,000 U.S. troops and civilians who annually operate on the continent.

Africom and the Pentagon jealously guard information about their outposts in Africa, making it impossible to ascertain even basic facts – like a simple count – let alone just how many are integral to JSOC operations, drone strikes, and other secret activities. “Due to operational security, I won’t be able to give you the exact size and number,” Lt. Cmdr. Anthony Falvo, an Africom spokesperson, told *The Intercept* by email. “What I can tell you is that our strategic posture and presence are premised on the concept of a tailored, flexible, light footprint that leverages and supports the posture and presence of partners and is supported by expeditionary infrastructure.”

2× P-3MS**6× U-28****8× F-15E**

U.S. AIRCRAFT BASED IN DJIBOUTI FOR TARGETED KILLING PROGRAM

Camp Lemonnier, a base in Djibouti, has been a focal point of the U.S. military's drone operations in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. A secret Pentagon study obtained by *The Intercept* lists the drones as well as surveillance and attack aircraft that operated out of Lemonnier in 2012 as part of the military's targeted killing program.

4× MQ-9 Reaper**10× MQ-1 Predator**



Illustration: The Intercept

If you search Africom's website for news about Camp Lemonnier, you'll find myriad feel-good stories about **green energy** initiatives, the **drilling** of water wells, and a **visit** by country music star Toby Keith. But that's far from the whole story. The base is a lynchpin for U.S. military action in Africa.

"Camp Lemonnier is ... an essential regional power projection base that enables the operations of multiple combatant commands," said Gen. Carter Ham in 2012, then the commander of Africom, in a **statement** to the House Armed Services Committee. "The requirements for Camp Lemonnier as a key location for national security and power projection are enduring."

A map in the Pentagon report indicates that there were 10 MQ-1 Predator drones and four larger, more far-ranging MQ-9 Reapers based at Camp Lemonnier in June 2012. There were also six **U-28As** — a single-engine aircraft that conducts surveillance for special operations forces — and two **P-3 Orions**, a four-engine turboprop aircraft originally developed for maritime patrols but since repurposed for use over African countries. The map also shows the presence of eight F-15E Strike Eagles, manned fighter jets that are much faster and more heavily armed than drones. By August 2012, an average of 16 drones and four fighter jets were **taking off** or landing there each day.

Located on the edge of Djibouti-**Ambouli** International Airport, Camp Lemonnier is also the headquarters for Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (**CJTF-HOA**), which **includes** soldiers, sailors, and airmen, some of them members of special operations forces. The camp — which also **supports** U.S. Central Command (Centcom) — has seen the number of

personnel stationed there jump around **450 percent since 2002**. The base has **expanded** from 88 acres to nearly 600 acres and has seen more than \$600 million already allocated or awarded for projects such as aircraft parking aprons, taxiways, and a major **special operations compound**. In addition, \$1.2 billion in construction and improvements has already been **planned** for the future.

As it grew, Camp Lemonnier became one of the most critical bases not only for America's drone assassination campaign in **Somalia** and **Yemen** but also for U.S. military operations across the region. The camp is so crucial to long-term military plans that last year the U.S. inked a deal securing its lease until 2044, agreeing to hand over **\$70 million** per year in rent – about **double** what it previously paid to the government of Djibouti.

Top photo: Google Earth

Additional reporting:  **Jeremy Scahill**
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01.



THE ASSASSINATION COMPLEX

Jeremy Scahill

The whistleblower who leaked the drone papers believes the public is entitled to know how people are placed on kill lists and assassinated on orders from the president.

02.

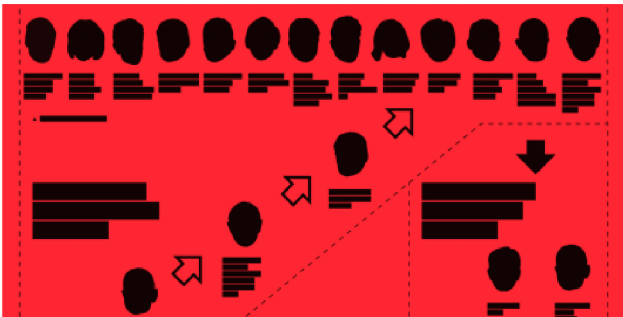


A VISUAL GLOSSARY

Josh Begley

Decoding the language of covert warfare.

03.



THE KILL CHAIN

Cora Currier

New details about the secret criteria for drone strikes and how the White House approves targets.

04.



FIND, FIX, FINISH

Jeremy Scahill

The tip of the spear in the Obama administration's ramped up wars in Somalia and Yemen was a special operations task force called TF 48-4.

05.

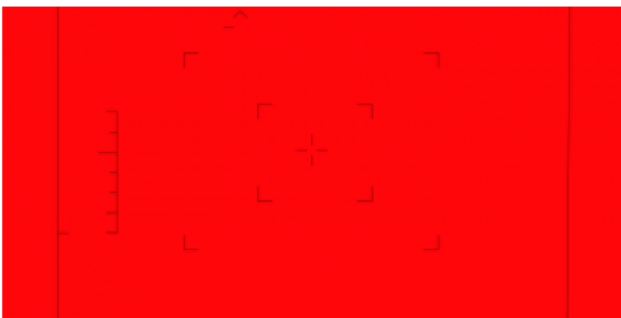


MANHUNTING IN THE HINDU KUSH

Ryan Devereaux

Leaked documents detailing a multi-year U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan reveal the strategic limits and startling human costs of drone warfare.

06.



FIRING BLIND

Cora Currier, Peter Maass

A secret Pentagon study highlights the chronic flaws in intelligence used for drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia.

07.



THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OBJECTIVE PECKHAM

Ryan Gallagher

For years Bilal el-Berjawi traveled freely from the U.K. to Somalia under the watchful eyes of intelligence services. Then the U.S. killed him with a drone strike.

08.



TARGET AFRICA

Nick Turse

To reduce the “tyranny of distance,” drones fly from bases in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Navy ships.

09. GLOSSARY

THE ALPHABET OF ASSASSINATION

A guide to the acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms used in *The Drone Papers*.

10. DOCUMENTS

SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 2/13 SMALL FOOTPRINT OPERATIONS 5/13 OPERATION HAYMAKER

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